

Grapefruit Juice and Medications

Whether pink, white or ruby red, grapefruit juice and some oral medicines don't mix. The juice can increase the effects—and side effects—of cholesterol lowering drugs and other medications by up to a factor of ten. Now scientists know why.

Grapefruit is loaded with compounds called furanocoumarins. The compounds inhibit an enzyme in the gut that chews up medication before it is absorbed. With the enzyme suppressed, the body absorbs more of the drug.

The juice may contain higher levels of the compounds than whole fruit because manufacturers sometimes add furanocoumarin-rich grapefruit oil to boost flavor.