Dietary information for people taking monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs)

MAOIs (monoamine oxidase inhibitors) act by blocking the enzyme that breaks down a group of chemicals in the body called monoamines. Tyramine is a monoamine and is found in many foods. MAOIs stop tyramine from being broken down; therefore, levels build up in the body and can cause a hypertensive crisis – a severe increase in blood pressure. Symptoms include: headache, pounding of the heart, light-headedness, dizziness, flushing of the face, numbness or tingling hands or feet, pain or stiffness in the neck, nausea or vomiting. If any of these occur, seek medical treatment.

Over the past few years, research has been carried out that shows that the diet for individuals prescribed MAOIs, do not need to be as restrictive as previously thought in the 1960s. Modern food hygiene, and handling practices and regulations in developed countries mean that excess tyramine levels are unheard of in fresh foods.

The tyramine content of food varies with maturity, length of storage, and individual tolerance levels may vary. Because of this, it is difficult to provide a clear diet list that will fit to all individuals.

The MAOI drugs that might cause an issue are:

* Phenelzine (Nardil)
* Tranylcypromine (Parnate)
* Isocarboxazid

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| Food group | Permitted | In moderation   |  | | --- | | (Recommended maximum portion) | | Avoid |
| Dairy products, and dairy alternatives | Cottage cheese, cream cheese, mascarpone, ricotta, babybel, cheese slices, yoghurt, pasteurised milk, butter and spreads, cream, sour cream | Mozzarella (30g) Parmesan (30g) | Aged cheeses, for example: cheddar, camembert, stilton, brie, blue cheese, gouda, feta, goats cheese  Unpasteurised milk |
| Soy and soybean | soya milk, soya yoghurts and desserts | Tofu (100g) | Soy sauce, all other fermented soya bean condiments, for example: miso  Textured vegetable protein |
| Meat, fish, and meat  alternatives | All fresh, frozen, tinned meat, fish and poultry | Pepperoni (30g) Pastrami (30g) Minced meat (150g) Pickled herrings (150g)  Quorn (100g) | All other aged, dried, or fermented meats and fish (for example: chorizo, salami, mortadella, surstromming) |
| Fruit and vegetables | All other fresh, frozen or canned fruit, vegetables and legumes not in the foods to avoid column |  | Fermented vegetables such as sauerkraut, banana skins and broad bean pods |
| Meat and yeast extracts | Brewer’s yeast and baker’s yeast,  gravies, stock, soup powders, bouillon, monosodium  glutamate (MSG) |  | Concentrated yeast extracts, for example: marmite, vegemite |
| Alcohol (in moderation) | Wine, cider, spirits | Non-alcoholic beer and lager (330mls) | Unpasteurised beer (for example: draught beer)  Home-made beers and wines |

These restrictions should remain in place for 2 to 4 weeks after you stop taking the medication. The reversible MAOI Moclobemide (Manerix) is less likely to cause symptoms and dietary restrictions are not needed.

Contact your doctor if you develop headaches or other symptoms that worry you.

You should contact your pharmacist or doctor before taking any other form of medication (for example: cough and cold remedies, nasal drops and sprays, diet pills, pain killing injections). Aspirin and Paracetamol are safe to use in the recommended doses.

Inform your dentist that you are taking MAOIs. Also, inform your anaesthetist well in advance if you are having a planned operation.

Please refer to the below link for further information:

<https://www.choiceandmedication.org/cornwall/medication/phenelzine/>