

Herbal Supplements: Drug Interactions & Safety

What's the Big Deal?

Many people use herbal supplements because they believe natural means safer and fewer side effects. The truth is, many herbs are dangerous and can interact with your prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

If you do decide to take herbal supplements please talk to your doctor, nurse, pharmacist or dietitian about it first.

This booklet lists 10 commonly used herbs and some effects they can have. We also included a list of herbs that are unsafe at any dose. We hope this helps you make the best decision for your health.

If you Choose to Use Herbs

Remember:

- Treat them as drugs. More does not mean better!
- Do not take more than the label says.
- Do not use them for more than 4 weeks unless your doctor says otherwise.
- If you experience any side effects, stop taking the herb and call your doctor.
- Always talk to your doctor or pharmacist before taking any herbal supplement.
- Talk to your doctor if you think you have a serious illness before taking any herbal supplement.

Capsaicin (Cayenne or Red Pepper)

The pepper is made into a capsule or cream.

What's it used for?

Arthritis pain and pain from diabetic neuropathy

Do not take the capsules if...

You take blood pressure medication such as:

- ◆ Capoten (Captopril)
- ◆ Prinivil (Lisinopril)
- ◆ Lotensin (Benazepril)
- ◆ Monopril (Fosinopril)
- ◆ Vasotec (Enalapril)
- ◆ Accupril (Quinapril)

OR

You take drugs for renal failure, heart failure or asthma.



Red peppers

What are the possible side effects?

- ◆ Diarrhea
- ◆ Stomach discomfort

Echinacea Purpurea

The flower and above ground parts are made into a capsule, liquid or tea.

What's it used for?

To fight colds, infections and help in wound healing

Do not take if...

You take any of these drugs:

- ◆ Anabolic steroids
- ◆ Amiodarone
- ◆ Methotrexate
- ◆ Ketoconazole
- ◆ Cyclosporine (Neoral, Sandimmune or SangCya)

OR

You have multiple sclerosis, autoimmune disease, AIDS (HIV) or tuberculosis.



Echinacea Flower

What are the possible side effects?

- ◆ Liver damage
 - ◆ Allergic reactions such as dermatitis
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Garlic

The bulb or oil is made into a capsule or eaten raw or cooked.

What's it used for?

To lower blood cholesterol, prevent blood clots and prevent colds and infection



Garlic Bulbs

Do not take if...

You take any of these drugs:

- ◆ Aspirin
- ◆ Warfarin (Coumadin)
- ◆ Ticlopidine (Ticlid)
- ◆ Clopidogrel (Plavix)
- ◆ Dipyridamole (Persantine)

or

You have bleeding problems.

You are planning to have surgery

What are the possible side effects?

- ◆ Allergic reactions such as skin rash if you handle raw garlic.
- ◆ Upset stomach or nausea.
- ◆ Low blood pressure
- ◆ Bleeding problems

Ginger

The root is made into a capsule or eaten raw or cooked.



Ginger Root

What's it used for?

Nausea, motion sickness, indigestion

Do not take if...

You take any of these drugs:

- ◆ Aspirin
- ◆ Warfarin (Coumadin)
- ◆ Ticlopidine (Ticlid)
- ◆ Clopidogrel (Plavix)
- ◆ Dipyridamole (Persantine)

or

You have stomach or intestinal ulcers, frequent heartburn, colitis, gallstones or other intestinal problems.

You have bleeding problems.

You are planning to have surgery.

What are the possible side effects?

- ◆ Heartburn
- ◆ Irregular heart beat
- ◆ Bleeding problems
- ◆ Diarrhea, gas and bloating
- ◆ Nausea/vomiting

Ginkgo Biloba

The leaves and seeds are made into a capsule or liquid.

What's it used for?

To improve memory and concentration or hearing problems

Do not take if...

You take any of these drugs:

- ◆ Aspirin
- ◆ Warfarin (Coumadin)
- ◆ Ticlopidine (Ticlid)
- ◆ Clopidogrel (Plavix)
- ◆ Dipyridamole (Persantine)

OR

You've ever had a stroke.

You have bleeding problems.

You are planning to have surgery.

What are the possible side effects?

- ◆ Headache
- ◆ Stomach upset
- ◆ Dizziness
- ◆ Restlessness
- ◆ Nausea/vomiting
- ◆ Diarrhea
- ◆ Bleeding problems

Ginseng (Panax, American, Siberian, Asian)

The root is made into a capsule, liquid or tea.

What's it used for?

To increase strength, fight stress and general vitality

Do not take if...

You take any of these drugs:

- ◆ MAO inhibitors
- ◆ Antidepressants
- ◆ Digoxin (Lanoxicaps or Lanoxin)
- ◆ Warfarin (Coumadin)

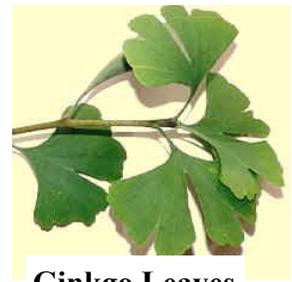
OR

You have high blood pressure.

You are planning to have surgery.

What are the possible side effects?

- ◆ Allergic reactions such as dermatitis
- ◆ Sleeplessness
- ◆ Nausea/vomiting
- ◆ Diarrhea
- ◆ Bleeding problems



Ginkgo Leaves



Ginseng Roots

Milk Thistle

The seed is made into a capsule or liquid.

What's it used for?

Chronic liver disease, gallbladder disease or digestive problems

Do not take if...

There are no known drug interactions

What are the possible side effects?

- ◆ Mild laxative effect
- ◆ Liver damage



Milk Thistle Plant

Saw Palmetto

The dried fruit is made into a capsule or liquid.

What's it used for?

Non-cancerous prostate problems and irritable bladder

Do not take if...

There are no known drug interactions

Talk to your doctor if you have trouble or pain when urinating before taking this herb.

What are the possible side effects?

- ◆ Upset stomach



Saw Palmetto Fruit

St. John's Wort

The whole flowering plant is made into a capsule, liquid or tea.

What's it used for?

Depression and anxiety

Do not take if...

You take any of these drugs:

- ◆ Cold medicine with dextromethorphan or pseudoephed (pseudoephedrine)
- ◆ Antidepressants
- ◆ Sedatives
- ◆ Indinavir sulfate (Crixivan)
- ◆ Digoxin (Lanoxicaps or Lanoxin)
- ◆ Theophylline (Slo-Dur or Theo-Dur)
- ◆ Cyclosporine (Neoral, Sandimmune or SangCya)
- ◆ Lithium
- ◆ Meperidine (Demerol)
- ◆ Selegiline
- ◆ Alcohol



St. John's Wort Plant

What are the possible side effects?

- ◆ Sensitivity to sunlight
- ◆ Constipation
- ◆ Headache
- ◆ Upset stomach
- ◆ Restlessness

Valerian

The root is made into a capsule, liquid or tea.

What's it used for?

Nervousness and trouble sleeping

Do not take if...

You take these drugs:

- ◆ Sleeping pills (Trazadone)
- ◆ Sedatives
- ◆ Alcohol
- ◆ Diphenhydramine (Benadryl)



Valerian Root

What are the possible side effects?

- ◆ Allergic reactions such as dermatitis
- ◆ Headache
- ◆ Restlessness
- ◆ Problems with heart function

A Word of Warning

Herbal supplements are not regulated or standardized by the FDA. You really don't know what you are getting.

As few as 25-60% of herbal supplements contain the actual herb or in the amount they claim. You could be spending a lot of money on a whole lot of nothing!



caution

Here are two web sites to help you find the safest herbal supplements:

<http://www.consumerlab.com>

<http://www.fda.gov/medwatch>

Where can I learn more about herbal remedies?

Web sites:

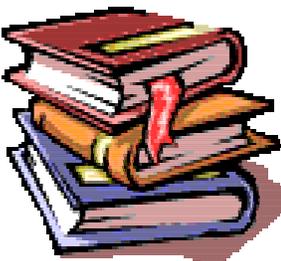
<http://www.herbalmed.org>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/home?id=SA00039>

<http://www.webmd.com>



Books and Journals:



The Consumer's Guide to Herbal Medicine.
Advanced Research Press; 1999.
by S. Karch.

The Honest Herbal, 4th ed Pharmaceutical Press; 1999.
by V. Tyler.

Not Safe At Any Dose!



Arnica



False Hellebore



Lily of the Valley



Periwinkle



Coltsfoot



Foxglove



Pasque Flower



Yellow Jessamine

Belladonna
Chaparral
Comfrey
Germander
Kava
Lobelia
Ma-Huang/Ephedra
Pennyroyal
Sassafras Root
Yohimbe

Not Recommended

These herbs may cause serious side effects when mixed with other herbs or medicines.

Arnica
Bryonia
Coltsfoot
Don Quai
Mistletoe Berry
False Hellebore
Henbane
Indian Snakeroot
Licorice Root
Life Root/Senecio
Lily of the Valley
Male Fern
Mandrake
Pasque Flower
Periwinkle
Pheasant's Eye
Squill
Thorn Apple
Yellow Jessamine