

Herbal Medicines and Dietary Supplements

POSSIBLE RISKS FOR PEOPLE WITH HEART DISEASE

Expertise in Matters of the Heart

Many people believe dietary supplements or herbal medicines are natural and safe—and therefore better. We can all think of natural products that are not safe, such as cyanide or arsenic. The body does not distinguish between drugs and herbs. Any substance that has enough biological activity to produce benefit can also produce harm.

About 30 percent of modern prescription drugs are obtained from plant sources. In order to be sold as a medicine, either by prescription or over-the-counter, products must meet strict requirements set by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

A few herbs have met these requirements and are sold as over-the-counter drugs (Senna, Cascara, Psyllium). Most herbs do not meet these requirements and cannot be sold as drugs. Most herbs are sold as dietary supplements, which means they are considered safe until proven unsafe. This is in contrast to prescription drugs, which must be proven safe and effective before they can be used.

Herbal products or dietary supplements can interact with either prescription or non-prescription drugs. Much like drug-to-drug interactions, herb-to-drug interactions can either increase or decrease the effectiveness of the drug or the herb.

Let your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist know about dietary supplements or herbal medicines you are taking, because these may interact with medicines you are taking.

Herbs with harmful effects or possible interactions with heart medicines

Please note: This is meant as an introduction to herbs, diet supplements, and heart medicines. This is not intended to be a comprehensive resource. Herbs not listed are not necessarily safe. This booklet is not intended as an endorsement of any particular herbs and herbal products. Please discuss with your healthcare professional.

COMMON NAME (Other names)	USES	SIDE EFFECTS OR PRECAUTIONS
ANGELICA <i>Dong Quai, Tang-Kuei</i>	Gynecologic disorders, premenstrual syndrome, postmenopausal symptoms, stomach spasms	Avoid use with blood thinners.
CHAMOMILE <i>Chamomilla recutita, Matricaria recutita, M. chamomilla</i>	Treatment of stomach disorders	Avoid use with blood thinners.
COENZYME Q-10 <i>CoQ-10, Ubiquinone, Ubidecarenone, Mitoquinine</i>	Cardiomyopathy, heart failure, immune system enhancer	May reduce effects of blood thinners.
FEVERFEW <i>Tanacetum parthenium</i>	Control migraine headaches, rheumatoid disorders, reduce inflammation	Patients taking blood thinners should not take feverfew.
GARLIC <i>Allium, Stinking Rose, Nectar of the Gods, Camphor of the Poor</i>	Antimicrobial; lowers cholesterol and blood pressure; anti-platelet agent	Avoid use with blood thinners.

COMMON NAME (Other names)	USES	SIDE EFFECTS OR PRECAUTIONS
GINGER <i>Zingiber officinale</i>	Prevents nausea, vomiting associated with motion sickness, pregnancy, and cancer therapy	Avoid use with anti-platelet drugs; can interfere with blood pressure medicines.
GINKGO BILOBA <i>EGB 761, GBE, GBX, Rokan, Tebonin, Ginkogink</i>	Stroke recovery, enhance poor blood flow in the legs, antioxidant actions	Avoid use with blood thinners.
GINSENG <i>Tartar Root, Western Ginseng, Asian Ginseng</i>	Reduce stress, fight fatigue, aphrodisiac; improve stamina, healing, and well-being	May cause high blood pressure, headaches, insomnia, nervousness, lower blood sugar levels. Decreases the effects of water pills. Avoid use with blood thinners.
GREEN TEA <i>Matsu-cha</i>	Prevention of high cholesterol, atherosclerosis	Avoid with use of blood thinners.
GUARANA <i>Paullinia cupana</i>	Used to treat drowsiness	May cause high blood pressure Avoid use with anti-platelet drugs.
GUGGUL <i>Commiphora mukul</i>	Reduces cholesterol and triglyceride levels in blood	Reduces effects of diltiazem and propranolol.
HAWTHORN LEAF <i>Crataegus oxyacantha</i>	Used as a heart tonic to lower blood pressure, reduce the frequency of chest pain, treat rapid or irregular heart rhythms, and control atherosclerosis	Can increase the effects and cause toxicity of digoxin and other heart drugs. Can cause fatigue, nausea, sweating, and low blood pressure.
HERBAL LAXATIVES DIURETICS <i>Cascara, Guarana</i>	For constipation and water retention	Can cause loss of potassium and increase toxicity of digoxin.
LICORICE ROOT <i>Glycyrrhiza uralensis, Glycyrrhiza glabra</i>	Used to treat peptic ulcers	Considered unsafe. Can increase blood pressure, cause potassium loss and water retention.
MA HUANG <i>Ephedra, Chinese ephedra, Teamster's Tea, Desert Tea, Popotillo, Natural Ecstasy, Metabolife</i>	Central Nervous System stimulant; appetite suppressant; treatment of asthma, colds, flu, nasal congestion	Banned by the F.D.A. Can cause palpitations, irregular heart rhythms, rapid heart rate, high blood pressure, chest pain, stroke, seizures.
NETTLE <i>Stinging Nettle, Common Nettle, Greater Nettle</i>	Diuretic, gout	May cause loss of potassium.

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COMMON NAME <i>(Other names)</i>	USES	SIDE EFFECTS OR PRECAUTIONS
RED YEAST <i>Monascus, Red Rice Yeast, Zhi Tai, XueZhiKang</i>	To lower cholesterol and triglyceride levels in the blood	Interferes with cholesterol-lowering medicines.
SAMe <i>S-adenosylmethionine</i>	Depression, fibromyalgia, osteoarthritis	Raises homocysteine levels (a risk factor for coronary artery disease). Recommend taking Folate, and Vitamins B12, B6 with SAMe.
SARSAPARILLA <i>Smilax aristolochiaefolii</i>	Promoted for body building	Causes digoxin toxicity.
SENNA <i>Cassia acutifolia, Senna alexandria</i>	Used to treat constipation	Chronic use can lead to potassium loss. May increase toxicity of digoxin.
ST. JOHN'S WORT <i>Hypericum, Goat Weed, Devil's Scourge</i>	Used as an anti-depressant	Lowers digoxin concentrations. Can interact with other antidepressants. Avoid use with blood thinners.
VALERIAN <i>Valeriana officinalis</i>	Anti-anxiety, sedation	Excitability, uneasiness, cardiac disturbances.
YOHIMBE <i>Pausinystalia yohimbe</i>	Used to treat impotence	May cause high blood pressure and fast heart beat.

If taking **warfarin (Coumadin)**, be careful about possible interactions with these herbs/supplements:

- Acerola
- Alfalfa
- Cellery seed
- Chlorella
- Cinchona Bark
- Clove
- Dandelion
- Danshen
- Devil's Claw
- Dong Quai
- Feverfew
- Fish oils
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Gingko
- Ginseng
- Green, leafy, herbal supplements
- Panax Ginseng
- Papain
- Red clover
- St. John's Wort
- Vitamin C
- Vitamin E
- Vitamin K

If taking anti-platelet drugs such as **Plavix or aspirin**, be careful about possible interactions with these herbs/supplements:

- Acerda
- Alfalfa
- American Ginseng
- Bromelam
- Chlorella
- Cinchona Bark
- Dong Quai
- European Mistletoe
- Fenugreek
- Feverfew
- Fish oils
- Gamma Linolenic Acid
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Gingko
- Ginseng
- Goldenseal
- Guar Gum
- Horse Chestnut Seed
- Panax Ginseng
- Papain
- Siberian Ginseng
- Vitamin E

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If taking medicine for **high blood pressure**, be careful about possible interactions with these herbs/supplements:

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| - Devil's Claw | - Licorice | - Squill |
| - Goldenseal | - Ma Huang | - Yohimbe |
| - Hawthorn Leaf | - Ginseng | |
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If taking **Digoxin or Lanoxin**, be careful about possible interactions with these herbs/supplements:

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| - St. John's Wort | - Foxglove | - Pheasant's Eye |
| - Sarsaparilla | - Hawthorn Leaf | - Lily-of-the-Valley |
| - Senna | - Milkweed | |

Other Dietary Supplements

Vitamin E

Vitamin E reduces the stickiness of platelets at doses of 200-440 IU per day. This may increase risk of bleeding. This is an issue if you are having surgery.

Cellanase

Promoted to eliminate cellulite, it contains ginkgo, sweet clover, bladderwrack, grape seed extract, fish oil, borage seed oil, and lecithin. Cellanase increases the risk of bleeding.

Weight-loss supplements

Some weight-loss supplements contain high amounts of caffeine and ephedrine. High blood pressure, rapid heart beat, irregular heart rhythms, and other more serious reactions have been reported. Ephedra supplements are banned.

Grapefruit juices

Grapefruit juices may cause adverse prescription drug reactions. Several compounds found in the juice prevent normal absorption of some drugs, as well as the body's normal process of detoxifying itself of medicines. As a result, the body absorbs greater amounts of some medicines. Be careful of grapefruit juice interactions if you are taking these medications:

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| - Amlodipine | - Estrogens | - Nimodipine |
| - Buspirone | - Felodipine | - Nisoldipine |
| - Carbamazepine | - Itraconazole | - Quinidine |
| - Carvedilol | - Lovastatin | - Saquinavir |
| - Clomipramine | - Midazolam | - Simvastatin |
| - Cyclosporine | - Nifedipine | - Triazolam |
| - Diltiazem | | |
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For more information call (970) 221-1000, (800) 459-4241, or visit www.heartcenteroftherockies.com