

Herbs and Herbal Supplements

Herbs and herbal supplements can be harmful to people taking heart medications.

Always tell your health care provider about any herbs or herbal supplements you are taking.

Bring the herbs and herbal supplements you are taking to every medical visit so they can be checked.

What are herbs and herbal supplements?

Herbs and herbal supplements are plants that are used for medicinal purposes. Some people call them botanicals or herbal remedies.

Why should you be careful taking these products?

We do not always know what the active ingredients are in many herbs and herbal supplements.

Herbs and herbal supplements:

- Can act in the same way as medications. This means they can be dangerous to your health if not taken correctly, if taken in large amounts, or if taken in combination with other medications.
- Can interact with heart medications. This could cause the medication to not work as it should, magnify the medication's side effects, or cause a life-threatening reaction.
- Have not been studied to the same extent as other medications.
- They are classified as dietary supplements not medications. Therefore they are not regulated the same way other medications are regulated. The rules for making dietary supplements are not as strict.

Tips

- ♥ Before you cook with herbs contact your health care provider
- ♥ Always talk to your health care provider or pharmacist before taking herbs or herbal supplements. They can review the herbal medicine and tell you whether it could impact your heart medication.
- ♥ If you are not sure what is considered an herb or herbal supplement, see the list on the next page.
- ♥ **Never** use herbs or herbal supplements if you are taking one of these medications:
 - aspirin
 - digoxin
 - diuretics
 - hypoglycemic medications such as insulin
 - Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Aleve), Celebrex
 - spironolactone
 - warfarin

Health care provider contact information

If you have questions about herbs or herbal supplements, contact your health care provider or pharmacist.

To learn more about herbal supplements, go online to MedlinePlus. Click on the tab 'Drugs & Supplements' then select 'Herbs and Supplements' (or [click here](#)).

Herb or Herbal Supplement	Reasons for taking	Possible problems when you have a heart condition or you are taking heart medication
Aloe Vera (Oral)	For constipation or indigestion To prevent skin irritation	Causes abnormal heart rhythms in pregnancy and in children
Angelica (Dong quai)	Appetite loss, indigestion, infection, pre-menstrual tension syndrome	Can increase the risk of bleeding, especially when taking warfarin
Arnica	To reduce aches, or pain from injury To relieve constipation	Raise blood pressure and can be toxic to the heart
Black Cohosh (Cimicifuga racemosa)	To relieve symptoms of menopause or pre-menstrual tension syndrome	Lowers blood pressure Can increase the risk of bleeding (cause more bleeding) Can be toxic to liver
Beta carotene	Antioxidant helps get rid of substances that harm the body (free radicals)	Increases the risk of death
CoQ10 (Co-enzyme Q10, Ubiquinone, Ubiquinol)	To increase your energy To treat heart failure or other heart conditions	Does not improve heart function Can decrease the effect of warfarin
Danshen (Salvia miltiorrhiza-root)	To treat heart conditions	Can increase the risk of bleeding (cause more bleeding)
Echinacea	To prevent colds	Interferes with an enzyme in the liver that helps clear medications out of the body
Ephedra (Ma Huang)	To treat asthma, obesity	Increases heart rate and blood pressure Could cause death if taken with certain heart medications
Feverfew	To treat/prevent migraines, arthritis	Can interfere with the clotting of your blood
Fish Oil	A common supplement	Can increase the risk of bleeding, especially if used in excess
Flaxseed	To lower cholesterol.	Can increase the risk of bleeding
Ginger	To relieve nausea, lower cholesterol, stop your blood from clotting, aid in digestion	Can interfere with the clotting of your blood Can interfere with how heart or high blood pressure medications work
Garlic	To lower cholesterol To prevent and treat colds and infections	If you are taking aspirin, warfarin or other anticoagulants, it can increase your risk of bleeding
Ginkgo	To improve circulation, memory. To prevent altitude sickness	If you are taking aspirin, warfarin or other anticoagulants, it can increase your risk of bleeding Interferes with the actions of diuretics (Lasix)
Ginseng	To improve memory, physical capacity, immune system and to slow aging	Increases blood pressure and heart rate. Do not take if you have high blood pressure (hypertension) Can increase blood levels of digoxin Can increase the risk of bleeding
Goldenseal	To treat constipation, Can also acts as an anti inflammatory	Increases blood pressure, causes high blood pressure Can interfere with blood thinners (anticoagulants)
Hawthorn	To treat high blood pressure and heart failure	Do not take if you are taking digoxin and blood pressure medications
Kelp	Commonly used supplement	Can increase effects of blood pressure and anticoagulant medication Causes low blood pressure and increases risk of bleeding
Licorice root	To treat coughing, stomach ulcers and liver cirrhosis	Increases blood pressure: Do not take if you have a heart condition or on heart medications
Nettle	To treat bladder infections, kidney infections, and kidney stones	Do not take if you have fluid retention caused by heart failure or poor kidneys
St Johns Wort	To treat depression and injuries	Can increase the risk of bleeding Can decrease the effect of digoxin Should not be taken with certain antidepressants
Yohimbine	To treat impotence	Increases heart rate Increases or decreases blood pressure

Adapted from Cleveland Clinic and Mayo Clinic information on herbs and herbal supplements.

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