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).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Herb or Herbal Supplement</th>
<th>Reasons for taking</th>
<th>Possible problems when you have a heart condition or you are taking heart medication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 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 treat 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.

March 2013. For more information on heart failure, go to [www.bcheartfailure.ca](http://www.bcheartfailure.ca). The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the healthcare team.