

NUTRIFAX[©]

2008

Herbal Supplements

Herbal medicine is the use of natural plants or plant parts, which are used to treat aches and pains. Herbs have gained a lot of popularity through the media. If misused they can be unsafe or dangerous to your health. Herbs should be treated like other medicines and taken only in the recommended amounts.

Did You Know?

- ◆ Herbal products can vary widely, making the amounts taken inconsistent and unreliable.
- ◆ Toxic impurities have been found in some cases.
- ◆ There are no guidelines or regulations to ensure dosage, purity or safety of herbs.
- ◆ Herbs are costly.
- ◆ Taking herbs with certain medication may be harmful.
- ◆ Natural does not mean safe.
- ◆ Claims may not be true or scientifically proven.

Talk to your doctor before taking any herbal supplements.

Helpful Tips:

- ◆ Do not self-diagnose.
- ◆ Be informed. Know the possible risks and side effects.
- ◆ Look for the word “standardized” on the label to assure consistent doses.
- ◆ Buy supplements from stores with high turnover.
- ◆ See our section on “Resources” for more information.

St. John’s Wort



The flowers of the plant contain a substance with anti-inflammatory and anti-depressant properties.

Claims and Common Uses:

- ◆ Relieves anxiety, depressive moods, sleep problems and nerve pain.
- ◆ Soothes the digestive system.
- ◆ Treats poor blood circulation.

Side Effects and Warnings:

- ◆ Do not take with any other anti-depressant medicine.
- ◆ Do not take with asthma inhalants.
- ◆ Do not take with beer, coffee, wine, chocolate, fava beans, salami, smoke or pickled foods and yogurt.
- ◆ Do not take with cold medicine, hay fever medicine or nasal decongestants.
- ◆ Do not take with narcotics (medicines for pain).
- ◆ May cause high blood pressure, headaches, stiff neck, nausea or vomiting.
- ◆ May cause increased sensitivity to the sun.
- ◆ May interfere with iron absorption.

Toxicity:

Rated slightly dangerous in persons over 55 years old and those taking higher doses than recommended or using doses for an extended period of time.

Ginkgo Biloba



Ginkgo biloba is an extract of the leaf of the ginkgo biloba tree. It has been shown to cause an increase in blood flow to the brain and throughout the body.

Claims and Common Uses:

- ◆ May improve short and long term memory and improve mental awareness.
- ◆ May improve blood flow to the lower legs and feet.
- ◆ Used for circulation-related disorders such as vascular disease, hemorrhoids and varicose veins.
- ◆ Causes blood vessel dilation.
- ◆ May reduce plaque formation.
- ◆ Show to have antioxidant properties.

Side Effects and Warnings:

- ◆ Do not take if you have had a stroke or are prone to having a stroke.
- ◆ Ginkgo biloba has been shown to have blood-thinning effects.
- ◆ Do not use if you are taking any blood thinners such as aspirin, or Coumadin (Warafin).
- ◆ Do not use if you have clotting disorders or hemophilia.

NUTRIFAX[®]

2006

Herbal Supplements – page 2

- ◆ May cause diarrhea, nausea, vomiting and headaches.
- ◆ Stop taking if you have any adverse reactions or any allergic reactions.

Toxicity:

See side effects and warnings.



Garlic

A medicinal herb, which can be used orally or on the skin.

Claims and Common Uses:

- ◆ Anti-inflammatory
- ◆ Anti-cancer
- ◆ Boosts the immune system
- ◆ Use for lung problems
- ◆ Used as an antibiotic for skin infections and to reduce swelling.

Side Effects and Warnings:

- ◆ May increase blood clotting time
- ◆ Stomach upset
- ◆ Diarrhea
- ◆ Bad breath
- ◆ May effect blood sugar control

Toxicity:

Avoid taking large amounts of garlic if you are taking aspirin or other drugs that thin the blood.

Green Tea



An unfermented herbal tea.

Claims and Common Uses:

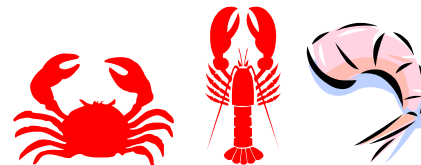
- ◆ Anti-cancer
- ◆ Decreases cholesterol
- ◆ Increases immune system
- ◆ May help treat heart disease

Side Effects and Warnings:

- ◆ Drinking too much green tea may cause nervousness, insomnia and irritability due to its caffeine content.

Toxicity:

See side effects and warnings.



Glucosamine

Naturally occurring molecule in the body found in such foods as lobster, shrimp, and crabs. It has natural properties that may help to form and repair cartilage.

Claims and Common Uses:

- ◆ May slow the progression of osteoarthritis
- ◆ May prevent muscle injuries; relieve tendon pain and help repair damaged cartilage.
- ◆ May reduce pain and swelling
- ◆ May improve mobility
- ◆ May help prevent progressive joint damage.

Side Effects and Warnings:

- ◆ Appears to be safe for all age groups.

Toxicity:

Appears to be safe for all age groups.

NUTRIFAX[©]

2006

Herbal Supplements – page 3

Ginseng



Ginseng is a healing herb from the ginseng plant root. It has natural properties that may increase the body's ability to deal with fatigue and stress.

Claims and Common Uses:

- ◆ Helps prevent fatigue and exhaustion.
- ◆ Boosts immune function
- ◆ Improves memory and concentration
- ◆ Reduces risk of heart disease
- ◆ Anti-cancer properties

Side Effects and Warnings:

- ◆ May cause headache insomnia, anxiety, increased blood pressure, diarrhea and nervousness.
- ◆ Should not be taken with coffee or hormone treatment medications.
- ◆ Should be used with caution if you suffer from cardiac disorders, diabetes, acute illness and hypertension.
- ◆ People who are highly energetic, nervous or tense should not take ginseng.

Toxicity:

Dosing should not exceed 5 – 10 grams daily.

Resources:

<http://www.consumerlab.com>
<http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/>
<http://www.nutrition.gov>
<http://dietsite.com>

Or Call:

National Council Against Health Fraud
(816) 228-4595

Herb Research Foundation
(800) 748-2617

O'Mathuna. *Where to with herbals?*
Alternative Therapy. 2000; 6:34-35.

Brinker F. *Herb Contraindications and Drug Interactions*,
2nd ed. Sandy, Ore: Eclectic Institute; 1997.

**Food and Nutrition Services
can assist in providing
nutrition information.
Call 703-813-4800 and
ask for a Registered Dietitian.**