

HERBAL DRUG ADVERSE EFFECTS AND INTERACTIONS

PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

What are herbal drug adverse effects and interactions?

Adverse drug effects are any effect of a drug other than the intended effect. Many medications, including herbals and vitamins, have powerful ingredients that interact with the human body in different ways. The foods we eat, our lifestyle, and illness can have an impact on our body's reaction to the medications, herbals and vitamins we take. Some of these reactions are harmless; however others may make the product less effective or may even cause dangerous side effects or other problems. Below is a table of herbal drug interactions and side effects. This is a partial list and is meant to serve as a reminder that all medications have the potential for interactions. If you have questions regarding any of the medications that you take (prescription, over-the-counter, herbals and vitamins) consult with a health care professional.

How can I get more information?

Greenwich Hospital Pharmacology Consultation Service is available to answer questions or for private consultation (by appointment). Call 203.863.4365 for information or to schedule an appointment.

For more Patient Fact Sheets, see the Greenwich Hospital web site at www.greenhosp.org and click on Patients & Visitors , then Patient Education.

ADVERSE REACTIONS OF SELECTED HERBALS & FOOD PRODUCTS

Herbal	Don't take with...	Potential Adverse Reaction
Garlic	Diabetes medications, Warfarin (Coumadin)	Can prevent diabetes medications from lowering blood sugar and increase the risk of bleeding.
Gingko	Aspirin, Warfarin, MAO Inhibitors	Can act as a blood thinner and may increase blood pressure.
Ginseng	Warfarin, Diabetes Medications, Antipsychotics, Caffeine, Phenezine (Nardil)	Can decrease the effect of these drugs and cause high blood pressure, increased excitability and hallucinations.
Kava	Alcohol, Sleeping Pills, Xanax, Klonopin, Valium, Antipsychotics,	Over-sedation, muscle spasms, and drowsiness.
Licorice	Spironolactone (Aldactone), Digoxin	Muscle weakness, swelling, and high blood pressure
Quinine	Amantadine (Symmetrel), Digoxin, Phenobarbital	Heart damage, clumsiness, unsteadiness and confusion.
St. John's Wort	Antidepressants, Digoxin, Anticonvulsants, Narcotics, Oral Contraceptives	Can reduce the effect of these drugs, increase the likelihood of seizures, confusion, nausea and fatigue.
Valerian Root	Alcohol, Sleeping Pills, Valium, Klonopin, Xanax, Phenobarbital	Can add to the sedative effects of these drugs and cause excessive drowsiness.
All herbs with diuretic properties (broom, buchu, dandelion, juniper)	Lithium	Can increase levels of lithium in the blood which can cause many side effects including slurred speech, confusion, hallucinations, coma, nausea, vomiting diarrhea, blurred vision and low blood pressure and palpitations.

*Adapted from: US Pharmacist * May 2000; U. S. Food and Drug Administration National Consumers League 1998*