

**PERIOPERATIVE HERBAL ALERT**

**PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET**

**Is it safe to take herbs before surgery?**

Herbs are natural medications that may cause reactions when taken prior to surgery. They may result in undesirable effects, including sickness or death. When scheduling a surgical procedure, be sure to tell your physician about all medications you take regularly including herbals and other “natural” products. In addition to increasing or decreasing the effect of anesthesia, some of the complications associated with taking herbal products include drug interactions, bleeding, stroke, and heart attack.

The most common complications associated with taking herbals prior to surgery are: bleeding, excessive drowsiness, interference with other medications and increased heart rate and blood pressure. The list that follows includes potential adverse effects of herbals and a partial list of herbal products that may cause these reactions. If you use herbals, they should be discontinued at least 1 – 2 weeks prior to surgery. Be sure to tell your physician that you were taking herbal products so you can be monitored appropriately during surgery. Consult with your physician or pharmacist before restarting these products after surgery. If you have questions about the herbal products listed below or any other herbal products, consult with your physician or pharmacist.

**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 Education Fact Sheets, see the Greenwich Hospital web site at [www.greenhosp.org](http://www.greenhosp.org) and click on Patients & Visitors, then Patient Education*

## HERBS TO DISCONTINUE 1-2 WEEKS PRIOR TO SURGERY

<i>Herb/Nutraceutical</i>	<i>Potential Adverse Effect</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Alfalfa,</li> <li>▪ Angelica Root</li> <li>▪ Arnica Flower</li> <li>▪ Anise</li> <li>▪ Asafoetida</li> <li>▪ Bogbean</li> <li>▪ Bromelain</li> <li>▪ Celery</li> <li>▪ Chamomile</li> <li>▪ Clove</li> <li>▪ Danshen</li> <li>▪ Devils Claw</li> <li>▪ Dong Quai</li> <li>▪ Fenugreek</li> <li>▪ Fever Few</li> <li>▪ Garlic*</li> <li>▪ Ginger*</li> <li>▪ Ginseng</li> <li>▪ Ginkgo</li> <li>▪ Horse Chestnut</li> <li>▪ Licorice Root</li> <li>▪ Lovage Root</li> <li>▪ Meadowsweet</li> <li>▪ Onion*</li> <li>▪ Papain</li> <li>▪ Parsley</li> <li>▪ Parsley</li> <li>▪ Passion Flower</li> <li>▪ Herbs</li> <li>▪ Poplar</li> <li>▪ Quassia</li> <li>▪ Red Clover</li> <li>▪ Rue</li> <li>▪ Sweet Clover</li> <li>▪ Tumeric</li> <li>▪ Vitamin E</li> <li>▪ Willow Bark</li> </ul>	<p>May cause bleeding after surgery or interact with medications prescribed after surgery to prevent blood clots.</p> <p>[*This pertains to the supplement product and not the normal intake amounts used in cooking.]</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Green Tea (Contains Vitamin K)</li> </ul>	<p>May limit the effectiveness of medication prescribed to prevent blood clots after surgery.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Echinacea</li> </ul>	<p>Prolonged use (greater than 8 weeks) may decrease the effectiveness of immunosuppressants (medications prescribed to prevent the rejection of a transplanted organ). May delay wound healing and increase the risk of infection.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Kava, Valerian</li> </ul>	<p>May cause excessive drowsiness.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ St. John's Wort</li> </ul>	<p>May reduce the effectiveness of the following medications: AIDS medications, Estrogen, medications prescribed to prevent transplant rejection, blood thinners, pain medications, and many heart and blood pressure medications.</p>