

Herb/Drug Interactions*

*Be advised: These listed interactions do not represent every possible interaction that may occur.

Aloe

Also listed as: Aloe vera

Precautions

The use of herbs is a time-honored approach to strengthening the body and treating disease. Herbs, however, can trigger side effects and can interact with other herbs, supplements, or medications. For these reasons, herbs should be taken with care, under the supervision of a health care provider.

Aloe gel is considered safe when applied to the surface of the skin, but should not be applied to open or deep wounds. In rare cases, it may cause an allergic reaction, mainly a skin rash. If you develop a rash, stop using the gel.

Taking aloe latex orally may cause severe intestinal cramps or diarrhea and is not recommended for use. Pregnant women should never take aloe latex because it may cause uterine contractions and trigger miscarriage. Nursing mothers should not take aloe latex either because the effects and safety for infants and children are not known.

Possible Interactions

If you are currently being treated with any of the following medications, you should not use aloe vera without first talking to your doctor:

Medications for diabetes -- The combination of aloe vera and glyburide, a medication used to treat type 2 diabetes, may help control blood sugar and triglyceride (fat) levels in the blood. People with diabetes who use aloe latex either alone or in combination with other medications must be monitored closely by their doctor to make sure blood sugar levels don't fall too low (a condition called hypoglycemia).

Hydrocortisone -- Aloe gel may enhance the ability of hydrocortisone to reduce swelling.

Digoxin and diuretics -- Because taking oral aloe can decrease levels of potassium in the body, aloe latex should not be used by people taking diuretics (water pills) or digoxin (a medication used to treat irregular heart rhythms and congestive heart failure). These drugs also lower potassium levels in the body, so a combination of aloe and digoxin or diuretics could cause potassium levels to fall too low.

American ginseng

Also listed as: Ginseng - American; Panax quinquefolium

Precautions

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Reported side effects of taking ginseng include:

- High blood pressure
- Insomnia
- Restlessness
- Anxiety
- Euphoria
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Headache
- Nosebleed
- Breast pain
- Vaginal bleeding

To avoid low blood sugar (hypoglycemia), even in people who do not have diabetes, you should take American ginseng with food.

People with hypertension should not take American ginseng products without specific guidance and instruction from a qualified health care provider. At the same time, people with low blood pressure as well as those with an acute illness or diabetes (because of the risk of a sudden drop in blood sugar), should use caution when taking ginseng.

The safety of taking American ginseng during pregnancy is unknown. Therefore, it is not recommended when pregnant or breastfeeding.

American ginseng should be discontinued at least 7 days prior to surgery. American ginseng can lower blood glucose levels and, therefore, create problems for patients fasting prior to surgery. In addition, American ginseng may act as a blood thinner, thereby increasing the risk of bleeding during or after the procedure.

Possible Interactions

If you are being treated with any of the following medications, you should not use ginseng without first talking to your health care provider:

Anti-Diabetic medications -- American ginseng may lower blood sugar levels. Therefore, this herb may interfere with the effectiveness of blood sugar lowering prescription medications. Talk with your health care provider before using American ginseng if you are taking medicines for diabetes, including insulin and oral hypoglycemic agents.

Blood thinning medications -- Some reports have indicated that ginsenosides may possibly decrease the effectiveness of warfarin, a blood-thinning medication. In addition, ginsenosides may inhibit platelet activity and, therefore, should probably not be used with aspirin either.

Psychiatric medications -- American ginseng may exaggerate the effects of medications used in various psychiatric disorders, so they should not be taken together. There have been reports of a possible interaction between Asian ginseng and the antidepressant medication, phenelzine (which belongs to a class known as monoamine oxidase inhibitors, resulting in symptoms ranging from manic-like episodes to headache and tremulousness

Morphine -- Asian ginseng may block the painkilling effects of morphine.

Arnica

Also listed as: Arnica montana

Precautions

Arnica is generally safe when used topically (externally). However, prolonged use may irritate the skin, causing eczema, peeling, blisters, or other skin conditions. Arnica should not be used on broken skin, such as leg ulcers. Also, people who are hypersensitive or allergic to the herb should avoid it.

Arnica is rarely used as an internal herbal remedy because it can cause dizziness, tremors, and heart irregularities. It may also irritate mucous membranes and cause vomiting. Large doses can even be fatal. Do not take arnica internally except under close supervision of your doctor. Homeopathic remedies, which use very small amounts of arnica, can usually be taken safely.

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, talk to your doctor before taking any medication, including herbs.

Possible Interactions

When used topically or in a homeopathic remedy, arnica does not interact with any conventional medications

Astragalus

Also listed as: Astragalus membranaceus; Astragalus mongholicus; Huang-qi; Milk-vetch root

Precautions

At recommended doses, astragalus has no serious side effects and can generally be used safely. It does interact with other herbs and medications (see "*Possible Interactions* ")

If you are pregnant or breast feeding, you should talk to your doctor before taking any medications, including herbs.

Possible Interactions

If you are being treated with any of the following medications, you should not use astragalus without first talking to your health care provider:

Antiviral medications -- Astragalus may increase the effects of some antiviral medications such as acyclovir and interferon.

Drugs that suppress the immune system -- Astragalus may counteract the immune-suppressing effects of cyclophosphamide, a medication used to reduce the chances of rejection in transplant recipients, as well as corticosteroids.

Diabetes medications -- Astragalus may lower blood sugar, making the effects of diabetes drugs stronger.

High blood pressure medication -- Astragalus may lower blood pressure, making the effects of these drugs stronger.

Diuretics (water pills) -- Astragalus is a diuretic and may make the effects of other diuretics stronger.

Anti-coagulants (blood thinners) -- Astragalus may make the effects of these drugs stronger, increasing the risk of bleeding and stroke.

Barberry

Also listed as: Berberis vulgaris; Berberry

Precautions

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People using normal and appropriate doses of barberry do not generally report side effects. Cases of nosebleeds and vomiting have been reported with extremely high doses of this herb.

In infants, berberine (a constituent of barberry) may interfere with liver function and might worsen jaundice.

Pregnant women should not take barberry because it may cause uterine contractions and trigger miscarriage.

Possible Interactions

Because there is not a lot of scientific evidence about barberry's effects, it is not known for certain what drugs, herbs, or supplements barberry may interact with. However, it is possible that barberry may interact with the following:

Antibiotics -- Taking barberry with antibiotics may decrease the effectiveness of the antibiotics. Talk to your doctor before combining the two.

Anticoagulants (blood thinners) -- Barberry may decrease the effectiveness of blood-thinning medication. Do not take barberry if you take anticoagulants unless under the supervision of a knowledgeable and qualified healthcare provider.

Antihistamines -- Barberry may increase the effects of antihistamines.

Blood pressure medication -- Barberry may increase the effects of these drugs. Do not take barberry if you take blood pressure medication.

Celecoxib (Celebrex) -- Barberry may interact with Celebrex. Talk to your doctor before combining the two.

Diuretics (water pills) -- Barberry may increase the effects of these drugs. Talk to your doctor before combining the two.

Medications for diabetes -- Barberry may lower blood sugar, making the effects of these drugs stronger. Do not take barberry if you take medications for diabetes

Bilberry

Also listed as: European blueberry; Huckleberry; *Vaccinium myrtillus*

Precautions

Bilberry fruit and extract are considered generally safe, with no known side effects. However, bilberry leaf and extract should not be taken in large quantities over an extended period of time because the tannins they contain may become toxic.

Possible Interactions

Anticoagulants (blood-thinning medication) -- In theory, because the anthocyanosides in bilberry may stop blood from clotting, there may be an increased risk of bleeding if you take bilberry with blood-thinning medication, including aspirin. The whole fruit may be safer in these instances. Ask your doctor before taking bilberry if you take blood-thinning medication.

Medication for diabetes -- Because bilberry appears to lower blood sugar, it could make the effects of diabetes medication stronger. Also, taking bilberry with other herbs that also lower blood sugar may result in hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). Herbs that also lower blood sugar include ginger, ginseng, fenugreek, and garlic. Do not take bilberry if you take medications for diabetes.

Black cohosh

Also listed as: Actaea racemosa; Black snakeroot; Bugbane; Bugwort; Cimicifuga racemosa; Rattle weed; Squawroot

Precautions

The use of herbs is a time-honored approach to strengthening the body and treating disease. However, herbs contain active substances that can trigger side effects and interact with other herbs, supplements, or medications. For these reasons, herbs should be taken with care, under the supervision of a practitioner knowledgeable in the field of botanical medicine.

Some individuals taking high doses of black cohosh report side effects including abdominal pain, diarrhea, dizziness, headaches, joint pains, nausea, slow heart rate, tremors, visual dimness, and vomiting.

It is not clear whether black cohosh stimulates the growth of breast cancer cells or inhibits their growth. Research has been limited and has produced mixed results. Women with a history of breast cancer, and those at a high risk for developing breast cancer (for example, a strong family history like a mother or sister with breast cancer), should not take black cohosh without talking to a healthcare provider.

Pregnant and breastfeeding women should avoid black cohosh as the herb may stimulate contractions and lead to premature labor.

Possible Interactions

There are no known scientific reports of interactions between black cohosh and conventional medications.

Calendula

Also listed as: Calendula officinalis; Garden marigold; Pot marigold

Precautions

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Calendula is generally considered safe for topical application. It should not be applied to an open wound without a doctor's supervision. People who are sensitive to plants in the daisy or aster family, including chrysanthemums and ragweed, may also have an allergic reaction to calendula (usually a skin rash).

Calendula is also known to affect the menstrual cycle and should not be used during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Theoretically, calendula may affect conception when taken by a man or woman, so couples trying to get pregnant should not use calendula.

Possible Interactions

There are no known scientific reports of interactions between calendula and conventional or herbal medications. Theoretically, calendula may interact with sedative and antihypertensive (blood pressure) drugs, so talk to your doctor before combining these drugs with calendula

Cat's claw

Also listed as: Una de gato; Uncaria tomentosa

Precautions

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Cat's claw appears to have few side effects. However, there have not been enough scientific studies of cat's claw to fully determine its safety. Some people have reported dizziness, nausea, and diarrhea when taking cat's claw. The diarrhea or loose stools tend to be mild and go away with continued use of the herb.

Cat's claw may cause miscarriage and should not be taken by pregnant or nursing women. Because of its possible effects on the immune system, it should not be used by individuals with autoimmune diseases, skin grafts, tuberculosis, or by those receiving organ transplants.

Possible Interactions

If you are currently being treated with any of the following medications, you should not use cat's claw without first talking to your health care provider.

Immunosuppressive medications -- In theory, because cat's claw may stimulate the immune system, it should not be used with medications intended to suppress the immune system, such as cyclosporin or other medications prescribed following an organ transplant or to treat an autoimmune disease.

NSAIDs -- Cat's claw may protect against gastrointestinal damage associated with nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and naproxen (Aleve).

Other medications -- Cat's claw may interact with the following medications:

- Anticoagulants (blood-thinning medication)
- Diuretics (water pills)
- Estrogens or progestins, including birth control pills
- Antihypertensive (blood pressure) medication

German chamomile

Also listed as: Chamomile - German; Matricaria recutita

Precautions

The use of herbs is a time-honored approach to strengthening the body and treating disease. Herbs, however, can trigger side effects and can interact with other herbs, supplements, or medications. For these reasons, herbs should be taken with care, under the supervision of a health care provider.

German chamomile is considered generally safe.

Chamomile may make asthma worse, so people with asthma should not take it.

Pregnant women should avoid chamomile because of the risk of miscarriage.

If you are sensitive to asters, daisies, chrysanthemums, or ragweed, you may also be allergic to chamomile.

Drinking large amounts of highly concentrated chamomile tea may cause vomiting.

Possible Interactions

If you take any of the following drugs, you should not use German chamomile without first talking to your health care provider:

Anticoagulants (blood-thinning medication) -- Chamomile may increase the risk of bleeding when taken with anticoagulant drugs such as warfarin.

Sedatives -- Chamomile can increase the effect of drugs that have a sedating effect, including:

- Anticonvulsants, such as phenytoin (Dilantin) and valproic acid (Depakote)
- Barbiturates
- Benzodiazepines, such as alprazolam (Xanax) and diazepam (Valium)
- Drugs to treat insomnia, such as zolpidem (Ambien), zaleplon (Sonata), eszopiclone (Lunesta), and ramelteon (Rozerem)
- Tricyclic antidepressants, such as amitriptyline (Elavil)
- Alcohol

The same is true of herbs with a sedating effect, such as valerian, kava, and catnip.

Other drugs -- Because chamomile is broken down by certain liver enzymes, it may interact with other drugs that are broken down by the same enzymes. Those drugs may include:

- Fexofenadine (Seldane)
- Statins (drugs that can lower cholesterol)
- Birth control pills
- Some antifungal drugs

Turmeric

Also listed as: *Curcuma longa*

Precautions

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Turmeric and curcumin are considered safe when taken at the recommended doses. However, extended or excessive use of curcumin may produce stomach upset and, in extreme cases, ulcers. (Note: normal therapeutic doses of turmeric protect from ulcers – see earlier discussion – but, at very high doses, it may induce ulcers. This is why it is very important to stick with the recommended dose of this herbal remedy.) Turmeric should not be taken by those who have been diagnosed with gallstones or obstruction of the bile passages without explicit direction from a qualified practitioner.

While pregnant women needn't avoid foods containing turmeric, its use as a medicinal herb is not recommended during pregnancy because the effects are not fully known. Studies in pregnant rats, mice, guinea pigs, and monkeys suggest that it is safe for those animals, but safety in pregnant women has not been tested.

Possible Interactions

If you are currently being treated with any of the following medications, you should not use turmeric or curcumin in medicinal forms without first talking to your healthcare provider.

Blood-Thinning Medications

Although no scientific reports have documented a bleed or other adverse interaction, turmeric, taken in medicinal doses may theoretically increase the blood thinning effects and, therefore the risk of bleeding from, drugs such as warfarin and aspirin.

Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

Turmeric has shown protection in animals from the development of ulcers due to this class of medications. NSAIDs include indomethacin, ibuprofen, and many other drugs that are often prescribed for pain and inflammation, such as that of arthritis.

Reserpine

Turmeric protected animals from increased gastric secretions (secretions in the stomach that can lead to damage along the walls of this organ) from reserpine used for high blood pressure.

Dandelion

Also listed as: Lion's tooth; Priest's crown; Swine's snout; *Taraxacum officinale*

Precautions

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Dandelion is generally considered safe. Some individuals, however, may develop an allergic reaction from touching dandelion, and others may develop mouth sores.

People with gallbladder problems and gallstones should consult a health care provider before eating dandelion.

Possible Interactions

Dandelion leaf is a diuretic and may increase the excretion of drugs from the body. If you are taking prescription medications, ask your health care provider before taking dandelion leaf. If you are currently being treated with any of the following medications, you should not use dandelion preparations without first talking to your health care provider:

- **Lithium** -- Animal studies suggest that dandelion may worsen the side effects associated with lithium, a medication used to treat bipolar disorder.
- **Antibiotics, quinolone** -- One species of dandelion, *Taraxacum mongolicum*, also called Chinese dandelion, may decrease the absorption of quinolone antibiotics (such as ciprofloxacin, ofloxacin, and levofloxacin) from the digestive tract. It is not known whether *Taraxacum officinale*, also known as common dandelion, would interact with these antibiotics in the same way. As a precaution, dandelion should not be taken at the same time as these antibiotics.

Echinacea

Also listed as: *Echinacea angustifolia*; *Echinacea pallida*; *Echinacea purpurea*; Purple coneflower

Precautions

The use of herbs is a time-honored approach to strengthening the body and treating disease. However, herbs contain active substances that may trigger side effects and interact with other herbs, supplements, or medications. For these reasons, people should take herbs under the supervision of a practitioner knowledgeable in the field of botanical medicine.

The American Herbal Products Association gives echinacea a class 1 safety rating, which means that it is safe when used appropriately (as instructed by the product label) and with the guidance of a healthcare professional. In Germany, use of echinacea is restricted to no longer than eight weeks at a time. Since echinacea loses its effectiveness after eight consecutive weeks. Regular users of this herb need "break" periods -- periods of time that they are not taking echinacea -- in order to enhance immune function and fight infection.

People with tuberculosis, leukemia, diabetes, connective tissue disorders, multiple sclerosis, HIV or AIDS, any autoimmune diseases, or, possibly, liver disorders should not take echinacea. There is some concern that echinacea may reduce the effectiveness of medications that suppress the immune system. For this reason, people receiving organ transplants who must take immunosuppressant medications should avoid this herb. (See *Possible Interactions*.)

In rare cases, echinacea may cause allergic reactions ranging from a mild rash to anaphylaxis (a life threatening reaction accompanied by throat tightening, shortness of breath, and, possibly, fainting). People with asthma and allergies may be at an increased risk for developing these adverse reactions.

There has been one report of an individual developing erythema nodosum (a painful skin condition) after taking echinacea to treat the flu.

When taken by mouth, echinacea may cause temporary numbing and tingling on the tongue.

Despite concerns that echinacea may be unsafe for pregnant or breastfeeding women, evidence suggests that the use of echinacea during pregnancy does not increase the risk of birth defects or other pregnancy-related health problems.

Possible Interactions

If you are taking any of the following medications, you should not use echinacea without first talking to your healthcare provider:

Econazole: Echinacea may be useful in combination with econazole, an antifungal agent used to treat yeast infections (such as athlete's foot). When echinacea is used together with econazole, recurrence rates of these infections may be reduced.

Immunosuppressants: Immunosuppressants refers to a group of medications that are used for two main purposes -- treat cancer and suppress the immune system following organ transplant so that the new organ is not rejected. Because echinacea can enhance immune function, people should not use the herb with immunosuppressive medications, especially when taken for organ transplant.

In terms of cancer treatment, a couple of test tube studies imply that echinacea may be useful when used in combination with cyclophosphamide, one medication in this class. Using echinacea with this or other chemotherapy agents that act as immunosuppressants, may allow the cancer-fighting medicines to kill the tumors while still protecting the immune system. If this theory proves to be correct then echinacea could possibly prevent many of the side effects of chemotherapy.

Feverfew

Also listed as: *Tanacetum parthenium*

Precautions

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Side effects from feverfew can include abdominal pain, indigestion, flatulence, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and nervousness. Mouth ulcers, loss of taste, and swelling of the lips, tongue, and mouth may occur in some individuals who chew raw feverfew leaves. Allergic reactions to feverfew, although rare, have also been reported. In fact, people with allergies to chamomile, ragweed, or yarrow will likely be allergic to feverfew and, therefore, should not take it.

Feverfew may increase the tendency to bleed, especially in individuals with bleeding disorders or taking blood-thinning medications, such as aspirin or warfarin. Do not use feverfew if you have bleeding disorders or are taking blood-thinning medications unless you are under the supervision of a doctor.

Pregnant and nursing women as well as children under 2 years of age should not take feverfew.

Do not abruptly stop taking feverfew if you have used it for more than 1 week. A withdrawal syndrome characterized by rebound headache, anxiety, fatigue, muscle stiffness, and joint pain may occur.

Possible Interactions

Feverfew may alter the effects of some prescription and non-prescription medications. If you are currently being treated with any of the following medications, you should not use feverfew without first talking to your health care provider.

Blood-thinning medications -- Feverfew may inhibit the activity of platelets (a substance that plays a role in blood clotting), so individuals taking blood-thinning medications (such as aspirin and warfarin) should consult a health care provider before taking this herb

Ginger

Also listed as: African ginger; Black ginger; Jamaican ginger; Zingiber officinale

Precautions

The use of herbs is a time-honored approach to strengthening the body and treating disease. Herbs, however, contain components that can trigger side effects and interact with other herbs, supplements, or medications. For these reasons, herbs should be taken with care, under the supervision of a health care provider qualified in the field of botanical medicine.

Side effects associated with ginger are rare, but if taken in excessive doses the herb may cause mild heartburn. Some of the mild gastrointestinal side effects, such as belching, heartburn, or stomach upset, may be relieved by taking ginger supplements in capsules.

People with gallstones should consult a doctor before taking ginger. Make sure to tell your doctor if you are taking ginger and will be going to surgery or placed under anesthesia for any reason.

Do not take ginger if you have a bleeding disorder or if you are taking blood thinning medications, including aspirin.

Possible Interactions

Ginger may alter the effects of some prescription and non-prescription medications. If you are currently being treated with any of the following medications, you should not use ginger without first talking to your health care provider.

Blood-thinning medications -- Although ginger may interfere with blood clotting, there have been no scientific or case reports of interactions between ginger and blood-thinning medications, such as aspirin and warfarin. However, people taking medications that thin the blood should use ginger only under the supervision of a health care provider

Ginkgo biloba

Also listed as: Fossil tree; Kew tree; Maiden hair tree; Ginkgo biloba

Precautions

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GBE is considered to be safe, and side effects are rare. In a few cases, gastrointestinal upset, headaches, skin reactions, and dizziness were reported.

Because ginkgo decreases platelet aggregation (stickiness), there is some concern that it may increase risk of intracranial (brain) hemorrhage. In fact, there have been several reports of bleeding complications associated with ginkgo use. However, it is not clear whether ginkgo or another factor (such as the combination of ginkgo and blood-thinning medications including aspirin and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory agents such as ibuprofen) caused the bleeding complications. One human study found that a ginkgo extract significantly prolonged bleeding time when given along with cilostazol (Pletal), a commonly used medication that inhibits platelet aggregation.

Pregnant and breastfeeding women should avoid using ginkgo preparations. In addition, ginkgo use should be discontinued at least 36 hours prior to surgery due to the risk of bleeding complications.

Do not ingest Ginkgo biloba fruit or seed.

Possible Interactions

Ginkgo may alter the metabolism and effectiveness of some prescription and non-prescription medications. If you are being treated with any of the following medications, you should not use ginkgo without first talking to your health care provider:

Anticonvulsant medications -- High doses of ginkgo could decrease the effectiveness of anticonvulsant therapy, such as carbamazepine (Tegretol) or valproic acid (Depakote), in controlling seizures.

Antidepressant medications -- Taking ginkgo along with selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRIs) antidepressants -- including fluoxetine (Prozac), sertraline (Zoloft), paroxetine (Paxil), and escitalopram (Lexapro) -- may cause serotonin syndrome. This condition is characterized by rigidity, tachycardia (fast heart rate), hyperthermia (high body temperature), restlessness, and diaphoresis (sweating). Ginkgo may enhance the effects (both good and bad) of antidepressant medications known as MAOIs, such as phenelzine (Nardil).

Antihypertensive medications -- Ginkgo may decrease blood pressure, so use of ginkgo along with prescription antihypertensive medications should be monitored by a health care provider. There has been a report of an interaction between ginkgo and nifedipine (Procardia), a calcium channel blocking drug used for blood pressure and arrhythmias.

Blood-thinning medications -- Ginkgo has blood-thinning properties and therefore should not be used if you are taking anticoagulant (blood-thinning) medications, such as aspirin, clopidogrel (Plavix), dipyridamole (Persantine), heparin, ticlopidine (Ticlid), or warfarin (Coumadin). There has been bleeding in the brain reported when using a ginkgo product and ibuprofen (Advil), a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID).

Blood sugar lowering medications -- Ginkgo was reported to increase insulin levels in healthy subjects and to decrease insulin levels in diabetic patients. Use ginkgo supplements under the supervision of a health care provider if you are diabetic and taking insulin or oral blood sugar lowering drugs.

Cyclosporine -- Ginkgo biloba may help protect the cells of the body during treatment with the immunosuppressive (decreases immunity) drug cyclosporine.

Thiazide diuretics -- Although there has been one literature report of increased blood pressure associated with the use of ginkgo during treatment with thiazide diuretics, this interaction has not been verified by clinical trials. Nevertheless, you should consult with your health care provider before using ginkgo if you are taking thiazide diuretics.

Trazodone -- There has been a report of an adverse interaction between ginkgo and trazodone (Desyrel), an antidepressant medication that resulted in an elderly patient going into a coma

Goldenseal

Also listed as: Eye balm; Ground raspberry; Indian paint; Indian turmeric

Precautions

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Pregnant or breastfeeding women as well as those with high blood pressure should avoid using goldenseal.

Goldenseal can irritate the skin, mouth, throat, and vagina. It can also reduce the number of "good" bacteria in the digestive system, which can cause nausea and diarrhea. Goldenseal may also cause an increased sensitivity to sunlight.

Goldenseal may interfere with the metabolism and effectiveness of certain medications. Do not use goldenseal if you are taking prescription or non-prescription medications unless you are under the supervision of a qualified health care provider.

Possible Interactions

A few studies report interactions between berberine (a major component of goldenseal) and prescription or non-prescription medicines. One study reported that berberine may decrease the effectiveness of tetracycline antibiotics. Other laboratory studies report that berberine may alter liver metabolism, potentially affecting the levels of medications processed in the liver. Several studies actually report that goldenseal itself does not interact with medicines metabolized by the liver (including an antiviral drug used in HIV infection and digoxin). However, if you are taking prescription or non-prescription medications, do not use goldenseal unless you are under the supervision of a qualified health care provider

Grape seed

Also listed as: Vitis vinifera

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At the recommended dosage, grape seed is considered safe. However, pregnant or breastfeeding women should avoid grape seed supplements.

Possible Interactions

There are no known scientific reports of interactions between grape seed and conventional medications. However, the proanthocyanidin component of grape seed may increase the chances for bleeding. If you are taking blood thinning medications or have bleeding disorders, do not use grape seed without the supervision of a health care provider

Green tea

Also listed as: Camellia sinensis

Possible Interactions

If you are currently being treated with any of the following medications, you should not drink green tea or take green tea extract without first talking to your doctor:

Adenosine: Green tea may inhibit the actions of adenosine, a medication administered in a hospital setting for an irregular (and usually unstable) heart rhythm.

Antibiotics: *beta-lactam*. Green tea may increase the effectiveness of beta-lactam antibiotics by reducing bacterial resistance to treatment.

Aspirin: Green tea and aspirin should not be mixed because they both prevent platelets from clotting. Using the two together may increase your risk of bleeding.

Benzodiazepines: Caffeine (including caffeine from green tea) has been shown to reduce the sedative effects of benzodiazepines (medications commonly used to treat anxiety, such as diazepam and lorazepam).

Beta-blockers, propranolol and metoprolol: Caffeine (including caffeine from green tea) may increase blood pressure in people taking propranolol and metoprolol (medications used to treat high blood pressure and heart disease).

Blood Thinning Medications: People who take warfarin, a blood thinning medication, should not drink green tea. Since green tea contains vitamin K, it can make warfarin ineffective. (See also the aspirin listing, above.)

Chemotherapy: The combination of green tea and chemotherapy medications, specifically doxorubicin and tamoxifen, increased the effectiveness of these medications in laboratory tests. However, these results have not yet been demonstrated in studies on people. On the other hand, there have been reports of both green and black tea extracts stimulating a gene in prostate cancer cells that may cause them to be less sensitive to chemotherapy drugs. Given this potential interaction, people should not drink black and green tea (as well as extracts of these teas) while receiving chemotherapy for prostate cancer in particular.

Clozapine: The anti-psychotic effects of the medication clozapine may be reduced if taken less than 40 minutes after drinking green tea.

Ephedrine: When taken together with ephedrine, green tea may cause agitation, tremors, insomnia, and weight loss.

Lithium: Green tea has been shown to reduce blood levels of lithium (a medication used to treat manic/depression).

Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs) . Green tea may cause a severe increase in blood pressure (called a "hypertensive crisis") when taken together with MAOIs used to treat depression. Examples of MAOIs include phenelzine and tranylcypromine.

Oral contraceptives. Oral contraceptives can prolong the amount of time caffeine stays in the body and may increase its stimulating effects.

Phenylpropanolamine. A combination of caffeine (including caffeine from green tea) and phenylpropanolamine (an ingredient used in many over-the-counter and prescription cough and cold medications and weight loss products) can cause mania and a severe increase in blood pressure. The FDA issued a public health advisory in November 2000 to warn people of the risk of bleeding in the brain from use of this medication and has strongly urged all manufacturers of this drug to remove it from the market

Hawthorn

Also listed as: *Crataegus laevigata*; *Crataegus monogyna*; *Crataegus oxyacantha*; Hedgethorn

Precautions

The use of herbs is a time-honored approach to strengthening the body and treating disease. Herbs, however, contain components that may trigger side effects and interact with other herbs, supplements, or medications. For these reasons, herbs should be taken with care, under the supervision of a health care provider qualified in the field of botanical medicine.

The American Herbal Products Association gives hawthorn a class 1 safety rating, which indicates that it is a very safe herb. Side effects are rare, but may include headache, nausea, and palpitations (a feeling of a racing heart). A recent review of 29 clinical studies with over 5,500 patients found that hawthorn was safe when used in recommended dosages. Doses found to be safe were from 160 - 1,800 mg daily and from 3 - 24 weeks in length.

Do not self-treat heart conditions without telling your doctor.

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, do not use hawthorn.

It is extremely important for you to note any changes you feel while you are taking hawthorn. People experiencing more pain, more angina attacks, or more exhaustion while walking or exercising should stop taking hawthorn and seek immediate medical attention. Even if you don't experience any of these symptoms, see your health care provider if your condition hasn't improved after 6 weeks of hawthorn treatment. Your progress should always be monitored by your health care provider.

Possible Interactions

If you are taking prescription or non-prescription medicines, talk to your health care provider before taking herbal supplements. If you are currently being treated with any of the following medications, you should not use hawthorn without first talking to your health care provider:

Digoxin -- Hawthorn may enhance the activity of digoxin, a medication used for irregular heart rhythms.

Phenylephrine -- In a laboratory study, an alcoholic extract of hawthorn fruit counteracted the effects of phenylephrine, a medication that constricts blood vessels and is commonly found in nasal decongestant products. However, since this interaction has not been studied in humans, the relevance of this interaction to people is unknown at this time

Lemon balm

Also listed as: Balm mint; Bee balm; Blue balm; Garden balm; Honey plant; *Melissa officinalis*; Sweet balm

Precautions

The use of herbs is a time-honored approach to strengthening the body and treating disease. Herbs, however, contain components that can trigger side effects and interact with other herbs, supplements, or medications. For these reasons, herbs should be taken with care, under the supervision of a health care provider qualified in the field of botanical medicine.

No side effects or symptoms of toxicity have been reported with lemon balm use, but this herb should not be used by pregnant or breast-feeding women.

Possible Interactions

- **Sedatives, Thyroid medications** -- Although not yet demonstrated in clinical studies, lemon balm may interfere with sedatives and thyroid medications. If you are taking sedatives (for sleep disorders or anxiety) or medications to regulate your thyroid, you should consult a health care provider before taking lemon balm

Licorice

Also listed as: Glycyrrhiza glabra; Spanish licorice; Sweet root

Precautions

The use of herbs is a time-honored approach to strengthening the body and treating disease. Herbs, however, contain components that can trigger side effects and that can interact with other herbs, supplements, or medications. For these reasons, herbs should be taken with care, preferably under the supervision of a health care provider in the field of botanical medicine.

Licorice consumption may cause serious side effects. Too much of the component glycyrrhizin causes a condition called pseudoaldosteronism, which can cause an individual to become overly sensitive to a hormone in the adrenal cortex. This condition can lead to headaches, fatigue, high blood pressure, and even heart attacks. It may also cause water retention, which can lead to leg swelling and other problems. An overdose of glycyrrhizin can lead to harmful conditions such as high blood pressure and even heart attack.

Although the most dangerous effects generally only occur with high doses of licorice or glycyrrhizin, side effects may occur even with average amounts of licorice. Some people experience muscle pain or numbness in the arms and legs. Too much licorice can also cause weight gain. These problems can probably be avoided if dosages are kept within the recommended guidelines. It is safest, though, to have use of licorice monitored by your health care provider.

People with high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes, or kidney, heart, or liver conditions should avoid licorice. This herb should also not be used by pregnant or breast-feeding women or by men with decreased libido or other sexual dysfunctions. Use of any licorice product is not recommended for longer than 4 - 6 weeks.

Possible Interactions

If you are currently being treated with any of the following medications, you should not use licorice without first talking to your health care provider:

- **Ace-inhibitors and diuretics** -- If you are taking angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors or diuretics to regulate blood pressure, do not use licorice products. Licorice could interfere with the effectiveness of these medications or could worsen possible side effects.
- **Aspirin** -- Animal studies suggest that licorice may reduce stomach irritation as well as the risk of stomach ulcers associated with aspirin.
- **Digoxin** -- Because licorice may dangerously increase the risk of toxic effects from digoxin, this herb should not be taken with this medication.
- **Corticosteroids** -- Licorice may increase the effects of corticosteroid medications. You should consult with your doctor before using licorice with any corticosteroids.
- **Insulin** -- Licorice may enhance some of the adverse effects of insulin.
- **Laxatives** -- Licorice may cause substantial potassium loss in people taking stimulant laxatives.
- **Oral contraceptives** -- There have been reports of women developing high blood pressure and low potassium levels when they took licorice while on oral contraceptives. Therefore, you should avoid licorice if you are taking birth control medications

Marshmallow

Also listed as: Althaea officinalis

Precautions

The use of herbs is a time-honored approach to strengthening the body and treating disease. Herbs, however, contain active substances that can trigger side effects and interact with other herbs, supplements, or medications. For these reasons, herbs should be taken with care, under the supervision of a practitioner knowledgeable in the field of botanical medicine.

There are no reported side effects of marshmallow, and it appears to be safe for use during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Possible Interactions

Marshmallow may interfere with the absorption of certain medications. For this reason, it is important to take marshmallow several hours before or after ingesting other herbs or medications

Milk thistle

Also listed as: *Silybum marianum*; St. Mary's thistle

Precautions

The use of herbs is a time-honored approach to strengthening the body and treating disease. Herbs, however, contain active substances that can trigger side effects and interact with other herbs, supplements, or medications. For these reasons, herbs should be taken with care, under the supervision of a practitioner knowledgeable in the field of botanical medicine.

Side effects from milk thistle happen only rarely, but may include stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, rash or other skin reactions, joint pain, impotence, and anaphylaxis (a life-threatening allergic reaction that causes throat tightness, shortness of breath, and, possibly, loss of consciousness.) The last two reactions listed are extremely rare.

Milk thistle should not be used by pregnant or breastfeeding women.

Possible Interactions

If you are currently being treated with any of the following medications, you should not use milk thistle without first talking to your healthcare provider.

Similar to its ability to protect against damage to the liver from alcohol and acetaminophen, as discussed in the Overview, milk thistle may also protect against liver damage from the following medications:

- **Antipsychotics** : This group of medications used for schizophrenia includes butyrophenones (such as haloperidol) and phenothiazines (such as chlorpromazine, fluphenazine, and promethazine)
- **Phenytoin** : a medication used for seizures
- **Halothane** : a medication used during general anesthesia

Other medications that may interact with milk thistle include:

Aspirin

One animal study found that milk thistle may enhance the effectiveness of aspirin in rats with liver cirrhosis. Whether this herb-drug combination has the same effect in people is not known at this time.

Chemotherapy medications

Preliminary research suggests that silybin may enhance the tumor fighting effects of cisplatin and doxorubicin when tested against breast and ovarian cancer cells.

In addition, milk thistle may protect the kidneys against toxic side effects associated with cisplatin and cyclosporine, two medications that are commonly used to treat cancer.

On the other hand, a different laboratory study revealed that the anticancer effect of cisplatin and ifosfamide was diminished in the presence of milk thistle. More research needs to be done to assess how milk thistle and cancer-fighting agents interact.

Stinging nettle

Also listed as: Nettle; *Urtica dioica*; *Urtica urens*

Precautions

The use of herbs is a time-honored approach to strengthening the body and treating disease. Herbs, however, contain active substances that can trigger side effects and interact with other herbs, supplements, or medications. For these reasons, herbs should be taken with care, under the supervision of a practitioner knowledgeable in the field of botanical medicine.

Stinging nettle is generally considered safe when used as directed. Occasional side effects include mild stomach upset, fluid retention, and hives (mainly from topical use). It is important to exercise care when handling the nettle plant as contact with skin can cause result in an allergic rash, such as contact dermatitis or hives.

Because nettle can alter the menstrual cycle and may contribute to miscarriage, pregnant women should not use nettle, and lactating women should avoid excessive use of this herb.

Possible Interactions

Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

In a scientific study of patients with acute arthritis, stewed stinging nettle leaves enhanced the anti-inflammatory effect of diclofenac, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication (NSAID). Although the combination of stinging nettle and NSAIDs may be beneficial for the treatment of arthritic conditions, a knowledgeable healthcare provider should be consulted before adding this herb to an existing medication regimen.

Passionflower

Also listed as: *Passiflora incarnata*

Precautions

The use of herbs is a time-honored approach to strengthening the body and treating disease. Herbs, however, contain active substances that can trigger side effects and that can interact with other herbs, supplements, or medications. For these reasons, herbs should be taken with care, preferably under the supervision of a practitioner knowledgeable in the field of botanical medicine.

In general, passionflower is considered to be safe and nontoxic. However, there are isolated reports of adverse reactions associated with this herb. Nausea, vomiting, drowsiness, and rapid heartbeat are among some of the adverse reactions reported.

Do not take passionflower if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Possible Interactions

Sedatives

An animal study has demonstrated that passionflower enhances the effects of pentobarbital, a medication used to promote sleep and for seizure disorders. Caution is advised when taking passionflower with sedatives because the herb may increase the effects of these substances. Additional examples of medications with sedative properties include certain antihistamines, such as diphenhydramine and hydroxyzine; drugs for anxiety, like a class called benzodiazepines including diazepam and lorazepam; and other medications used to treat insomnia. Interestingly, passionflower appears to work similarly to benzodiazepines

Rosemary

Also listed as: Rosmarinus officinalis

Precautions

The use of herbs is a time-honored approach to strengthening the body and treating disease. Herbs, however, contain active substances that can trigger side effects and interact with other herbs, supplements, or medications. For these reasons, herbs should be taken with care, under the supervision of a practitioner knowledgeable in the field of botanical medicine.

Rosemary is generally considered safe when taken in recommended doses. However, there have been occasional reports of allergic reactions. Large quantities of rosemary leaves, because of their volatile oil content, can cause serious side effects, including vomiting, spasms, coma and, in some cases, pulmonary edema (fluid in the lungs).

Those who are pregnant or breastfeeding should not use rosemary in quantities larger than those normally used in cooking. An overdose of rosemary may induce a miscarriage or cause damage to the fetus.

Rosemary oil, taken orally, can trigger convulsions and should not be used internally. Topical preparations containing rosemary oil are potentially harmful to hypersensitive people who may be allergic to camphor.

Possible Interactions

Doxorubicin

In a laboratory study, rosemary extract increased the effectiveness of doxorubicin in treating human breast cancer cells. Human studies will be necessary to determine whether this is true in people. Meanwhile, those taking doxorubicin should consult with a healthcare practitioner before taking rosemary.

Saw palmetto

Also listed as: Sabal serrulata; Serenoa repens

Precautions

Because of the potential for side effects and interactions with medications, herbs should be taken only under the supervision of a knowledgeable healthcare provider.

Saw palmetto is a very mild herb. The American Herbal Products Association gives saw palmetto a class 1 safety rating, which means that it is safe when used as directed. Side effects are very rare, although mild stomach complaints and minor headaches may occur. One case of significant bleeding during surgery has been attributed to saw palmetto use prior to the operation.

Saw palmetto has not been studied or used in women who are pregnant or nursing.

Saw palmetto may interfere also with the absorption of iron.

Possible Interactions

Finasteride (Proscar)

Because saw palmetto may work similarly to finasteride (Proscar), you should not use this herb in combination with finasteride or other medications used to treat BPH.

Slippery elm

Also listed as: Red elm; Sweet elm; *Ulmus fulva*; *Ulmus rubra*

Precautions

The use of herbs is a time-honored approach to strengthening the body and treating disease. Herbs, however, contain active substances that can trigger side effects and interact with other herbs, supplements, or medications. For these reasons, herbs should be taken with care, under the supervision of a practitioner knowledgeable in the field of botanical medicine.

There are no known health hazards reported for slippery elm when it is properly administered in recommended therapeutic doses. However, taking slippery elm with oral medications may decrease the absorption of these medications; therefore, it may be a good idea to take slippery elm several hours before or after other herbs or medications you may be taking.

Based on use by and experience of herbal specialists, slippery elm is thought to be safe in pregnant and nursing women, but this has not been tested scientifically.

Possible Interactions

There are no reports in the scientific literature to suggest that slippery elm interacts with any conventional medications. As stated in Precautions, however, it is best to take slippery elm several hours before or after other herbs or medications because of possible interference with absorption

Skullcap

Also listed as: Mad-dog skullcap; Scullcap; *Scutellaria lateriflora*

Precautions

The use of herbs is a time-honored approach to strengthening the body and treating disease. Herbs, however, contain active substances that can trigger side effects and interact with other herbs, supplements, or medications. For these reasons, herbs should be taken with care, under the supervision of a practitioner knowledgeable in the field of botanical medicine.

There are mixed opinions as to the safety of skullcap because it has, in the past, been contaminated with *Teucrium* species, a group of plants known to cause liver problems. It is therefore important that skullcap be obtained from a reliable source.

Overdose of skullcap tincture produces giddiness, stupor, mental confusion, twitching, irregular heartbeat, and epileptic-like symptoms. Skullcap should not be used during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Possible Interactions

While there are no reports in the scientific literature to suggest that skullcap interacts with any conventional medications, it does possess sedative properties. Therefore, skullcap should be used with caution, if at all, by those who are taking benzodiazepines (anti-anxiety medications) such as diazepam or alprazolam, barbiturates (medications often prescribed for sleep disorders or seizures) such as pentobarbital, or other sedative medications (including antihistamines).

St. John's wort

Also listed as: *Hypericum perforatum*; Klamathweed

Precautions

The use of herbs is a time-honored approach to strengthening the body and treating disease. Herbs, however, contain active substances that can trigger side effects and interact with other herbs, supplements, or medications. For these reasons, herbs should be taken with care, under the supervision of a practitioner knowledgeable in the field of botanical medicine.

Many people take St. John's wort for depression. It is important to bear in mind that depression can be a serious condition and may be accompanied by thoughts of suicide or homicide, both of which warrant immediate medical attention. Evaluation by a healthcare professional should always be sought before using St. John's wort.

Potential side effects from St. John's wort are generally mild. They include stomach upset, hives or other skin rash, fatigue, restlessness, headache, dry mouth, and feelings of dizziness or mental confusion. Although not common, St. John's wort can also make the skin overly sensitive to sunlight (called photodermatitis). Those with light skin who are taking St. John's wort in large doses or over a long period of time should be particularly careful about sun exposure. The use of sunscreen with a skin protection factor (SPF) of at least 15, and the avoidance of sunlamps, tanning booths, or tanning beds is recommended while taking St. John's wort.

Because of the potential for serious interaction with medications used during surgery, patients should discontinue the use of St. John's wort at least 5 days prior to surgery and should avoid taking it post surgery. See Possible Interactions for more information about mixing St. John's wort and medications.

St. John's wort should not be taken by women who are pregnant, trying to become pregnant, or breastfeeding.

Possible Interactions

St. John's wort interacts with a range of medications. In most cases, this interaction leads to reduced effectiveness of the medication in question; in other cases, however, St. John's wort may increase the effects of a medication.

If you are currently being treated with any of the following medications, you should not use St. John's wort without first talking to your healthcare provider:

Antidepressants

St. John's wort may interact with antidepressant medications that are used to treat depression or other mood disorders, including tricyclics, SSRIs (see earlier discussion), and monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs) such as phenelzine. How St. John's wort works is not entirely clear, but is believed to be similar to how SSRIs work. Therefore, using St. John's wort with this class of antidepressants in particular can lead to exacerbation of side effects including headache, dizziness, nausea, agitation, anxiety, lethargy, and lack of coherence.

Digoxin

St. John's wort should not be taken by those on digoxin because the herb may decrease levels of the medication and reduce its effectiveness.

Immunosuppressive medications

St. John's wort should not be taken by those on immunosuppressive medications such as cyclosporine because it may reduce the effectiveness of these medications. In fact, there have been many reports of cyclosporin blood levels dropping in those with a heart or kidney transplant, even leading to rejection of the transplanted organ.

Indinavir and other protease inhibitors

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a public health advisory in February 2000 concerning the probable interaction between indinavir and St. John's wort that resulted in significantly decreased blood levels of this protease inhibitor, a class of medications used to treat HIV or AIDS. The FDA recommends that St. John's wort not be used with any type of antiretroviral medication used to treat HIV or AIDS.

Loperamide

There has been a report of a possible interaction between St. John's wort and the antidiarrheal medication, loperamide leading to delirium in an otherwise healthy woman.

Oral contraceptives

There have been reports of breakthrough bleeding in women on birth control pills who were also taking St. John's wort.

Reserpine

Based on animal studies, St. John's wort may interfere with the intended action of this medication used to treat high blood pressure.

Theophylline

St. John's wort can reduce levels of this medication in the blood leading. Theophylline is used to open the airways in those suffering from asthma, emphysema, or chronic bronchitis.

Warfarin

St. John's wort interferes with the anticoagulant medication, warfarin, by reducing blood levels as well as the effectiveness. This leads to the need to for adjustments in doses of this medication

Valerian

Also listed as: Valeriana officinalis

Precautions

The use of herbs is a time-honored approach to strengthening the body and treating disease. Herbs, however, contain active substances that can trigger side effects and interact with other herbs, supplements, or medications. For these reasons, herbs should be taken with care, under the supervision of a practitioner knowledgeable in the field of botanical medicine.

The American Herbal Products Association (AHPA) gives valerian a class 1 safety rating, which indicates that it is a safe herb with a wide dosage range.

Nevertheless, some people have a "paradoxical reaction" to valerian. This means that instead of feeling calm or sleepy, they suddenly feel nervous, anxious, and restless after they take valerian and may experience palpitations (a feeling of a racing heart).

There is also some evidence that in cases where valerian has been used over a long period of time, serious withdrawal symptoms may occur when it is stopped abruptly.

Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding are advised against using valerian and, because of its tranquilizing effects, valerian should not be used while driving, operating heavy machinery, or engaging in other activities that require alertness. Also, some warn against use if you have liver disease because of a few reports of liver damage when valerian was used in combination with skullcap, another herb used for anxiety.

Possible Interactions

If you are currently being treated with any of the following medications, you should not use valerian without first talking to your healthcare provider.

Anesthesia

For those facing surgery, it is important to note that valerian may increase the effects of anesthesia and, thus, it is important to discuss the use of valerian with your healthcare providers (particularly the surgeon and anesthesiologist) well in advance of your planned operation. The doctors may advise you on how to taper use of valerian prior to the surgery. Or, they may allow you to continue use up to the time of surgery, making any necessary adjustments to the anesthesia and giving you medication to avoid possible withdrawal symptoms from the valerian while in the hospital.

Sedatives and Anti-anxiety Medications

There are no reports in the scientific literature to suggest that valerian interacts with any conventional medications. However, valerian is a sedative herb that may increase the effects of alcohol and medications for anxiety and insomnia. Valerian should not

be combined with barbiturates (medications, such as pentobarbital, prescribed for sleep disorders or seizures), and should be used with caution, if at all, by people taking benzodiazepines (anti-anxiety and sleep inducing medications including alprazolam, diazepam, and lorazepam) or other sedative medications (such as antihistamines).

Willow bark

Also listed as: Crack willow; European willow; Liu-zhi; Purple willow; Pussy willow; Salix alba; Salix nigra; Weeping willow; White willow

Precautions

Because willow bark contains salicin, people who are allergic or sensitive to salicylates (such as aspirin) should not use willow bark. Some researchers suggest that people with asthma, diabetes, gout, gastritis, hemophilia, and stomach ulcers should also avoid willow bark. If you have any of these conditions, take nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) regularly or blood-thinning medication, be sure to consult your health care provider before taking willow bark. Willow bark should not given to children under the age of 16.

Side Effects

Side effects tend to be mild. However, gastrointestinal irritation and ulcers are potentially associated with all compounds containing salicylates. Overdoses of willow bark may cause skin rash, stomach inflammation/irritation, nausea, vomiting, kidney inflammation, and tinnitus (ringing in the ears).

Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

Salicylates are not recommended during pregnancy, so pregnant and breastfeeding women should not take willow bark.

Interactions and Depletions

Because willow bark contains salicylates, it has the potential to interact with a number of drugs and herbs. Talk to your doctor before taking willow bark if you take any other medications, herbs, or supplements.

Willow bark may interact with any of the following:

Anticoagulants (blood-thinning medications) -- Willow bark may strengthen the effects of drugs and herbs with blood-thinning properties.

Beta blockers -- including Atenolol (Tenormin), Metoprolol (Lopressor, Toprol-XL), Propranolol (Inderal, Inderal LA). Willow bark may reduce the effectiveness of these drugs.

Diuretics (water pills) -- Willow bark may reduce the effectiveness of these drugs.

Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs -- including ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and naproxen (Aleve). Taking willow bark with these drugs may increase risk of stomach bleeding.

Methotrexate and phenytoin (Dilantin) -- Willow may increase levels of these drugs in the body, resulting in toxic levels.

