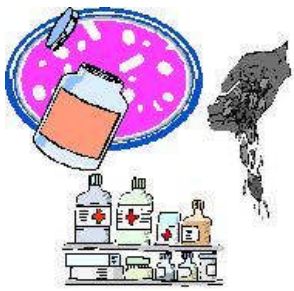


Highlights: Herb and Plant Supplements

This fact sheet is about herb and plant supplements. Some people use them along with other things. A few of the most popular ones are listed in this fact sheet. The numbers below note body changes that can happen when you use them.

The numbers are also on the back of this paper. They note side effects that have been reported. Too few studies look at the use of supplements. The most studied one is St. John's Wort.



Herb or plant supplements can change how drugs work in the body. They can work against each other in many ways. This includes drugs such as alcohol. Supplements can change how the body's liver works. Some drug levels may be more than usual but others can be less. Supplements also change how foods, vitamins and minerals are used in the body.

Supplements can

- ❶ increase the risk of bleeding
- ❷ cause either low or high blood sugar levels
- ❸ change how the stomach or intestines work
- ❹ change how the immune system works
- ❺ change blood test results
- ❻ change blood pressure levels
- ❼ decrease liver function
- ❽ change how drugs work in the body



See a health care provider at least twice a year. Ask about supplements before you take them. For more information on how herbs change the way that drugs work visit the Herb-Drug Interaction Handbook web site at www.herbdrug.org.

Note: This fact sheet helps people learn about herb and plant supplements. This information is current as of March 2007. It is not medical, fitness, dietetic, or professional advice. Ask a health care provider about the things in this fact sheet.

Highlights: Herb and Plant Supplements

The numbers below note body changes that can happen when you use a supplement.

Common Name	Popular Uses	Possible Side Effects
Aloe	'Cure all' HIV/AIDS, etc.	②⑧ Acemannan (Carrisyn) may lower <u>AZT levels</u> .
Bitter Melon	'Cure all' HIV/AIDS, diabetes, herpes, etc.	①②③⑤ <u>Depress immune system</u> , body aches, insomnia
Cat's Claw	'Cure all' HIV/AIDS, etc.	①③⑧
Echinacea	Antiviral, colds/flu, tumors, yeast infections	③⑧ <u>Not good</u> for people with HIV/AIDS, TB, MS or other autoimmune diseases. Muscle loss, fever, insomnia
Ephedra	Better sports performance, stimulant, weight loss	②⑥⑦⑧ The U.S. FDA banned supplements with ephedra in 2004 due to side effects such as death.
Garlic	'Cure all' HIV/AIDS, heart disease, etc.	①②③⑧ <u>Lower antiviral drug levels</u> . Decrease body fat, change cholesterol levels, breath and body odor
Ginger	Motion sickness, nausea	①⑧ <u>Not good</u> for people with gallbladder disease.
Ginkgo biloba	Memory disorders	①③⑧ Allergic skin reactions, headache
Ginseng	Anabolic, colds/flu, diabetes, digestion, better performance	①②⑥⑧ Headache, lower thyroid function
Guggul	Antioxidant, heart and thyroid disease	③⑧ Headache, rash
Kava Kava	Relaxant	①③⑦⑧ Banned in Australia, Canada, and Germany due to bad side effects including death.
Licorice	Colds, hepatitis, herpes, HIV/AIDS, stomach upset	⑥ Body swelling, headache, heart failure, seizures, tiredness
Milk Thistle	'Cure all' HIV/AIDS, diabetes, liver disease	③⑧
Olive Leaf	Diabetes, herpes, HIV/AIDS	⑧
Psyllium	Bowel disorders, heart disease	②⑧ Take drugs 1-2 hours before or after psyllium. Decrease loose stools, lower vitamin B ₁₂ and mineral levels in the body
St. John's Wort	Anti-inflammatory, brain disorders, help to stop smoking	①③⑥⑦⑧ Avoid direct sunlight; use eye protection. Anxiety, chest tightness, death, depression, dizziness, fast heart beat, headache, hives, insomnia, memory loss, rash, seizures, short of breath, throat tightness, weakness