
Herbs, Natural Products and Dietary Supplements

Do I need to tell my health care team about what herbal products I am taking?

Yes! It is vital that you discuss herbal use with your health care team. This is even more crucial if you:

- are taking any medications
- have diabetes
- have high blood pressure
- have heart disease
- have liver disease
- are having surgery
- are pregnant or nursing a baby

Can supplements and/or herbals interact with the medications I am taking?

Yes! Herbals and/or supplements can interact with some prescription medications making them less safe and /or less effective. Under some circumstances they could produce adverse effects, some of which could be life-threatening.

Are supplements safe with surgery?

It is important to fully inform your doctor about the vitamins, minerals, herbals or any other supplements, especially before elective surgery. You may be asked to stop taking these products at least 2-3 weeks ahead of the procedure to avoid potentially dangerous supplement/drug interactions.

Who makes sure supplements are safe?

Manufacturers are responsible for making sure their products are safe before they go to market. Dietary supplement products are not reviewed by the government before they are marketed, but the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has the job of acting against any unsafe dietary supplement product that reaches the market.

What do I do if a supplement I am taking makes me sick?

- Tell your health care team.
- Call the FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088 to report it.

What do I need to know?

- Always remember to tell your healthcare team when you start or stop taking an herbal, natural product, or dietary supplement.
- The term “natural” does not mean that the product is safe.
- Follow the dosing guidelines. More is not better.
- Choose single herb products. Avoid mixtures.
- Choose only products marked with USP or Consumer Lab seals. These seals mean the products are tested for quality and content.



Where can I find more information about herbals?

National Institutes of Health, Office of Dietary Supplements
Bethesda, MD 20892 <https://ods.od.nih.gov/>

U.S Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition
5100 Paint Branch Parkway
College Park, MD 20740
Call 1-800-FDA-1088
www.fda.gov/Food/DietarySupplements/default.htm

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine
P.O. Box 7923
Gaithersburg, MD 20898
1-888-644-6226
www.nccam.nih.gov/