

Safety Precautions

In general, herbal supplements are very safe and effective. However, when taking medication, you should investigate possible interactions with an herbal remedy you may be considering consuming. Be careful about mixing herbs and drugs that have similar actions. Similarly, avoid combining herbs and drugs that have opposing effects.

Additional considerations when ingesting herbal supplements are:

- Herbs that can thin blood, such as dong quai, feverfew, garlic, and ginger, could cause problems if taken before surgery. It is best to stop taking any of these herbs at least ten to fourteen days before surgery.
- Herbs that have an effect on the nervous system like kava and valerian may increase the effects of anesthesia. Stop taking any of these herbs at least a week before surgery.
- Unless you're under the care of a knowledgeable practitioner, avoid taking any herbs during pregnancy, in particular during the first trimester. Exception: it's considered safe to take up to 1,000 milligrams of ginger in capsule or candied forms for morning sickness. Short-term use of echinacea seems safe for pregnant women who develop colds or flu.
- Breastfeeding women should avoid most medicinal herbs for the first four to six months of a baby's life. An exception is herbs that can stimulate breast milk production such as fenugreek, blessed thistle, vitex, and alfalfa.
- Herbal remedies that are safe for adults may not be safe for children; therefore, ask a knowledgeable practitioner for advice on herbs that are safe for children and the appropriate dose.

