

MEDfacts

An Educational Health Series From National Jewish Health®



Using Herbal Supplements Wisely

Consult your health care provider before taking herbal remedies. Herbs can interact with your medications. Herbs may also be harmful for certain health conditions or medical procedures. When you see your doctor, be sure to inform him/her of which herbs you are taking.

- Do not assume a product is safe or effective. Herbs are not overseen by a federal regulatory agency for guarantee of quality control or safety. Herbs may not contain the content that is claimed on the label, and may contain harmful substances that are not listed on the label.
- Although touted as natural and safe, herbs act as drugs but often lack appropriate scientific study.
- If you buy herbs, purchase them from a reliable source. Labels should include ingredient list, precautions, manufacturer's name and address, batch or lot number, manufacture date, expiration date, and dosage information.
- Choose herbs that have been certified by a reputable third party testing company.
- Do not take herbal supplements in place of your current medications.
- Introduce one herb at a time to monitor how well the supplement is working and watch for side effects. Using multiple herbal supplements puts you at a greater risk for side effects and medication interactions.
- Do not give herbs to infants or young children.
- Do not take herbs if you are pregnant, nursing or planning a pregnancy.
- Use extreme caution with herbs purchased in other countries or through mail order.
- Herbs can be part of an overall health maintenance program. Before taking any herbs, investigate a product thoroughly.

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Reliable sources to learn more about herbal therapy include:

- National Institute of Health
- www.nccam.nih.gov
- Federal Drug Administration: www.fda.gov

Note: This information is provided to you as an educational service of National Jewish. It is not intended to substitute for consulting with your own physician.

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