

# Alternative Medicines

► **Alternative or Complementary Medicines can be harmful.**

A “natural” product does not mean that it is either safe or effective. Herbal medications usually are not recommended for children, pregnant or nursing women, the immunosuppressed, or elders on prescription drugs.

► **Medications & Supplements to avoid taking together.**

Diet /Herbal Supplement	Medication	Possible Interaction or Side Effect
Aloe	Antiarrhythmics, Corticosteroids, Diuretics, Lanoxin	May lower potassium, leading to excess drug effect and toxicity
Cayenne (Capsicum)	Blood-thinners (Aspirin, Coumadin, Plavix, Ticlid)	Increases risk of bleeding
Dong Quai	Blood-thinners (Aspirin, Coumadin, Plavix, Ticlid)	Increases risk of bleeding
Echinacea	Immunosuppressants (Cyclosporine)	Decreases effectiveness leading to organ rejection
Ephedra (MaHuang)	Antihypertensives, Stimulants (Caffeine), Hypoglycemics, Lanoxin, MAOI's	Interferes with drug effect: raises blood pressure or heart rate, elevates blood sugar, causes seizures or strokes
Garlic clove, tablets	Blood-thinners (Aspirin, Coumadin, Plavix, Ticlid)	Increases risk of bleeding
Garlic clove, tablets	Hypoglycemics	Increases effect - may lead to severe low blood sugar
Garlic clove, tablets	HIV medications, Cyclosporine	Decreases effectiveness leading to drug resistance or organ rejection
Garlic clove, tablets	Oral Contraceptives	Decreases effectiveness - may lead to pregnancy
Ginkgo leaf, Biloba	Blood-thinners (as above), Thiazide diuretics	Increases risk of bleeding, elevates blood pressure
Ginkgo leaf, Biloba	Seizure lowering drugs, Trazodone (Desyrel)	Decreases effectiveness, possible seizures, coma

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## Medications & Supplements to avoid taking together (continued)

Ginseng (American, Panax, Siberian)	Blood-thinners (as above)	Conflicting evidence - may increase risk of bleeding
Ginseng (American, Panax, Siberian)	Hypoglycemics	Increases effect - may lead to extreme low blood sugar
Ginseng (American, Panax, Siberian)	Immunosuppressants (Cyclosporine)	Decreases effectiveness, possible organ rejection
Ginseng (American, Panax, Siberian)	Diuretics (Lasix)	Decreases effectiveness leading to elevated blood pressure
Glucosamine	Hypoglycemics	Increases insulin resistance leading to altered blood sugar
Goldenseal	Sedatives	May see additive effects intensifying sedation
Hawthorn	Cardiovascular Drugs, Digoxin	Conflicting evidence - may interfere with effectiveness or increase digoxin effect
Kava-Kava	CNS Depressants (Alcohol, Barbiturates, Benzodiazepines-Ativan, Valium, Xanax)	May see additive effects intensifying sedation and increased risk of liver damage
St. John's Wort	Crixivan (Indinavir), Cyclosporine, Coumadin, Digoxin, Tegretol, Theophylline	Increases metabolism leading to reduced drug effectiveness & potential worsening of disease
St. John's Wort	Antidepressants including: Celexa, Paxil, Prozac, MAOI's	Additive serotonin elevation leading to fever, muscle rigidity, altered mental status
St. John's Wort	Oral Contraceptives	Increases metabolism – can lead to pregnancy
Valerian	CNS Depressants (Alcohol, Barbiturates, Benzodiazepines)	Additive effects may intensify sedation

**Expert Poison Information 24/7: 1-800-222-1222**