

Herbal Remedies and Prescription Medications

Herbal medicines are increasingly popular, but many patients do not inform their physicians that they are using these alternative remedies, according to one of the studies released by the American Medical Association last month. This can be dangerous because some of the herbs affect prescription drugs.

CHAMOMILE: Contains coumarin, but chamomile's effects on the body's anticoagulation system have not been studied. If used with anticoagulants such as warfarin, close monitoring by a doctor is advised.

ECHINACEA: May be toxic to the liver if used for more than eight weeks. Should not be used with drugs that can cause liver problems, such as anabolic steroids, amiodarone, methotrexate and ketoconazole. Should not be given with immunosuppressants such as corticosteroids and cyclosporine because it can stimulate the immune system

EVENING PRIMROSE OIL AND BORAGE: Should not be used with anticonvulsants because they may lower the seizure threshold.

FEVERFEW: Effect on migraine headaches may be compromised by nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as aspirin and ibuprofen. Also should not be used with the drug warfarin or other anticoagulants because feverfew inhibits clotting.

GARLIC: Should not be used with warfarin because it affects clotting.

GINGER: Should not be used with warfarin because it affects clotting.

GINGKO: Can inhibit clotting so should not be used with aspirin or other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs or with anticoagulants such as warfarin or heparin. Also should not be used in conjunction with anticonvulsant drugs used by epileptics, such as carbamazepine, phenytoin and phenobarbital, or with tricyclic antidepressants.

GINSENG: Should not be used with warfarin, heparin, aspirin and other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs because it can inhibit clotting. Also may cause headache, tremulousness and manic episodes in patients treated with phenelzine sulfate. Should not be used with estrogens or corticosteroids because it may add to those drugs' side effects. May also interfere with the heart drug digoxin or with digoxin monitoring. Should not be used by diabetics because it can affect blood glucose levels.

KARELA: Should not be used by patients with diabetes because it can affect blood glucose levels.

KAVA: Should not be used with the tranquilizer alprazolam because it may result in coma.

KELP: May interfere with thyroid replacement therapies.

LICORICE: Can offset the effect of the diuretic drug spironolactone. May also interfere with heart drug digoxin or with digoxin monitoring.

ST. JOHN'S WORT: Can produce skin reactions to light so fair-skinned users may wish to take care and anyone taking other drugs that cause light sensitivity, such as piroxicam or tetracycline, may want to avoid this herb. The active ingredient in St. John's wort is uncertain, so it should NOT be used with two common types of psychiatric drugs called monoamine oxidase inhibitors and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors. (SSRI's). Tannic acid in the herb may inhibit absorption of iron.

VALERIAN: Should not be used with barbiturates, such as thiopental and pentobarbital--can cause excessive sedation.

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Additional Nutritional Supplements

PURPORTED PSYCHOTROPIC BENEFITS	CLAIMS
357 Magnum maximum strength caffeine tablets	Stimulant
44 Magnum maximum strength caffeine tablets	Stimulant
5-HTP (Serotonin Precursor)	Precursor to the neurotransmitter serotonin. Relieves depression as well as most anti depressant drugs with almost no side effects.
Acetyl-L-Carnitine	Reverses decline in the neurotransmitter acetyl-L-carnitine. Increases production of dopamine in the brain. Reverses age associated memory decline.
B Vitamin Complex	Used to improve memory loss from lack of Vitamin B
Chinese foxglove root	Used for insomnia and used in conjunction with other herbs to treat forgetfulness.
Clover, Red	"Nerve tonic" and as a sedative for exhaustion
Cordycepa (Chinese Caterpillar)	Helps adaptation to excessive stress; also helps boost stamina and energy.
Cyperus	Used to treat depression.
Darniana	Used to treat depression, anxiety and listlessness.
DHA	Fish oil which protects the cell membrane integrity of brain cells.
EDTA (Oral Chelation Therapy)	Cleanses the blood stream of heavy metals which can prevent memory problems..
False Unicorn	Used for menopausal depression
Fish Oil*	Used as a mood stabilizer
Gaba	Reduces feelings of anger and anxiety in as little as 15 minutes.
Ganoderma	Used to treat insomnia and nervousness
Gingko Biloba*	Improves small capillary circulation in the brain which improves cognitive functioning. Lessens "old age related" anxiety and confusion. Used to treat depression.
Ginseng	Helps to control stress induced high levels of cortisol. Used to treat depression.

Gotu Kola	Mental stimulant. Used regularly can prevent nervous breakdown, also used to treat a "mental breakdown".
Hawthorn	Used for insomnia and nervous conditions.
Hops	Used for insomnia and for anxiety.
Hyssop	Used to treat anxiety
Inositol	B vitamin used to relieve anxiety and stress.
Kava (Dipper Methysticum)	As effective as certain benzodiazapines for anxiety. Also used for insomnia and depression.
Kola	Used to treat depression
Lavendar	Used for relief of nervous tension and stress, insomnia and depression.
Hops	Used for insomnia and for anxiety.
Hyssop	Used to treat anxiety
Melatonin*	Helps to fall asleep quickly and naturally
Mugswort	Used for nervousness, shakiness and insomnia
Mullein	Used as a sedative
Nutmeg	Used to relieve chronic nervous problems and insomnia.
Passionflower	Used for insomnia and anxiety.
Pennyroyal	Used to treat anxiety
Peony	Used in combination with other herbs to ease emotional nervous conditions.
Peppermint	Used to treat insomnia and anxiety
Phosphatidyl Serine	Improves memory to 12 years younger
Polygonum	Used to treat insomnia
Poppy	Used for insomnia and nervousness
Rosemary	Used to treat nervous disorders
SAMe (S-Adenosyl-Methionine)	As effective as tricyclic antidepressants without the bad side effects.
Schisandra	Used to treat insomnia and forgetfulness
Snooze Fast	Safe, effective and fast acting sleep aid
St. John's Wort (Hypericum)*	Effective anti-depressant with almost no side effects; particularly effective for SAD. Lowers cortisol levels and enhances gaba (one of the calming neurotransmitters) activity in the brain.
Scullcap	Immediate relief from all chronic and acute diseases that affect the nerves and also used for insomnia.
Tyrosine	Encourages healthy levels of dopamine and norepinephrine in the brain. Increases low levels of tyrosine.

Valerian	Used for insomnia, anxiety and nervousness.
Vitamin C	Slows Parkinson's Disease
Vitamin E	Reduces the risk of mini-strokes
Yarrow	Used for insomnia and anxiety