

## LISTING OF HERBS/INTERACTIONS

### **Capsicum**

Avoid taking with:

Angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors – used for diabetic kidney disease,

heart failure, high blood pressure

Theophylline (Elixophyllin, Uniphyll) – an asthma medication

Sedatives

Antidepressants

Capsicum may increase the absorption and the effect of these drugs. It may also

increase the likelihood of developing a cough if used with ACE inhibitors.

### **Coenzyme Q-10**

Avoid taking with:

Warfarin (Coumadin) – a blood thinning medication

Chemotherapy

The use of Warfarin and coenzyme Q-10 together increase your risk of excessive

bleeding. Coenzyme Q-10 may reduce the effectiveness of some chemotherapy. Some

drugs, such as those used to lower cholesterol (lovastatin, pravastatin, simvastatin), blood

sugar (glyburide, tolazamide) and blood pressure (beta blockers such as Inderal,

Lopressor), can alter coenzyme Q-10's effectiveness. Also, people with diabetes should

be aware that coenzyme Q-10 might decrease their need for insulin.

### **Dong quai**

Avoid taking with:

Warfarin (Coumadin) – a blood thinning medication

St. John's Wort

Antibiotics (sulfonamides, quinolones)

The combination of dong quai and Warfarin may increase your risk of bleeding.

Using St. John's Wort or certain antibiotics with dong quai may increase your skin's sensitivity to the sun.

### **Echinacea**

Avoid taking with:

Anabolic Steroids

Amiodarone (Cordarone, Pacerone) – used to treat an irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia)

Methotrexate (Rheumatrex) – used to treat rheumatoid arthritis

Ketoconazole (Nizoral) – an antifungal medication

Cyclosporine (Neoral, Sandimmune) – an immunosuppressant

HIV protease inhibitors – human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) medications

Benzodiazepines (Alprazolam, Valium) – anti-anxiety medications

Calcium channel blockers – used to treat high blood pressure and heart disease

Echinacea shouldn't be combined with other drugs that can cause liver damage.

And because this herb may stimulate the immune system, it may interfere with the effects of immunosuppressants. Echinacea may also elevate the levels of HIV protease inhibitors, calcium channel blockers and anti-anxiety drugs in the blood, increasing your risk of side effects.

### **Ephedra**

In late December 2003, the Food and Drug Administration announced the ban of ephedra from the marketplace because of health concerns. Ephedra increases your risk of heart attack, stroke, seizures and death. Combined with caffeine, decongestants, stimulants and other drugs, it becomes especially risky.

Ephedra is potent herb that's present in many products, especially those designed to give you pep or help you lose weight. It goes by many names, such as ma-huang,

herbal ecstasy, mahuang, mahuanggen and ma huang root. Any “natural” product that claims to cause weight loss or increase energy may have ephedra in it. Please check with your doctor or pharmacist before assuming it doesn’t.

### **Feverfew**

Avoid taking with:

Aspirin

Ticlopidine (Ticlid) – blood-thinning medication

Clopidogrel (Plavix) – blood-thinning medication

Dipyridamole (Persantine) – blood-thinning medication

Warfarin (Coumadin) – blood-thinning medication

These medications can reduce blood clot formation. Feverfew may increase this effect, causing spontaneous and excessive bleeding.

### **Garlic**

Avoid taking with:

Aspirin

Ticlopidine (Ticlid) – blood-thinning medication

Clopidogrel (Plavix) – blood-thinning medication

Dipyridamole (Persantine) – blood-thinning medication

Warfarin (Coumadin) – blood-thinning medication

Cyclosporine (Neoral, Sandimmune) – An immunosuppressant

Saquinavir (Fortovase, Invirase) – an HIV protease inhibitor

Combined with garlic, anticoagulant medications may cause spontaneous and excessive bleeding. Garlic may decrease the effectiveness of immunosuppressants and HIV protease inhibitors. Garlic may cause lower levels of blood sugar, which may decrease your need for insulin if you have diabetes. If you take insulin and garlic together, monitor your blood sugar carefully and report any changes to your doctor.

## **Ginger**

Avoid taking with:

Aspirin

Ticlopidine (Ticlid) – blood-thinning medication

Clopidogrel (Plavix) – blood-thinning medication

Dipyridamole (Persantine) – blood-thinning medication

Warfarin (Coumadin) – blood-thinning medication

H2 blockers and proton pump inhibitors – acid-blocking medication

Ginger may increase the effect of anticoagulants, which may cause excessive bleeding. It may also increase the production of stomach acid, which could counteract the effects of antacid medications. Ginger may lower your blood pressure or blood sugar levels, which may reduce your need for blood pressure-lowering medications or insulin if you have diabetes. Monitor your blood pressure or blood sugar levels if you take these medications and report any changes to your doctor.

## **Ginkgo**

Herbal Action: This concentrated leaf extract may improve mental function, protect against Alzheimer's disease and boost circulation in extremities.

Those who suffer from bleeding or blood-clotting disorders are advised not to take ginkgo concentrated extract because it's a blood thinner. Combining this herb with blood-thinning medications (including Coumadin, Heparin and Trental) or NSAIDS nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory or Aspirin may cause internal bleeding. Ginkgo may also increase the amount of antidepressant medication in your blood. When combined with anti-psychotic medication, ginkgo may cause seizures. It also affects insulin levels.

## **Ginseng**

Avoid taking with:

Warfarin (Coumadin) – blood-thinning medication

Phenelzine (Nardil) – an antidepressant

Digoxin (Lanoxicaps, Lanoxin) – heart medication

Insulin and oral antidiabetic medications

This root is purported to help the body withstand stress. Some herbal experts also believe that it reduces fatigue. Used with Warfarin, ginseng can increase your risk of bleeding problems. Ginseng with Phenelzine may cause headache, trembling and manic behavior. Ginseng may interfere with digoxin's pharmacologic action or the ability to monitor digoxin's activity. Ginseng can reduce blood sugar levels in people with type 2 diabetes. Without careful glucose monitoring, the use of ginseng with insulin or oral antidiabetic medications may cause dangerously low blood sugar levels.

### **Ipriflavone**

Avoid taking with:

Warfarin (Coumadin) – blood-thinning medication

Antipsychotics

Tacrine (Cognex) – an Alzheimer's disease medication

Theophylline (Elixophyllin, Uniphyll) and zafirlukast (Accolate) – asthma medications

Caffeine

Tamoxifen (Nolvadex) – a cancer treatment and prevention medication

Cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril) – a muscle relaxant

Celecoxib (Celebrex) – pain-relieving arthritis medication

Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications – pain-relieving medication

Ipriflavone affects the way these drugs are metabolized, usually increasing the levels of the medications in the blood and the effects of the drugs.

### **Kava**

Avoid taking with:

Sedatives

Sleeping Pills

Antipsychotics

Alcohol

Drugs used to treat anxiety or Parkinson's disease

Combined with these drugs, kava can produce deep sedation and, in some cases, even coma. Until more is known, don't start taking kava or products that contain kava.

If you already do so, contact your doctor for advice and ask if you need liver function tests to check for unexpected liver problems. Don't take if you have a history of liver problems, if you're depressed, or if you take antidepressants or prescription sedatives.

### **Melatonin**

Avoid taking with:

Nifedipine (Adalat, Procardia) – used to lower blood pressure and treat heart disease

Fluvoxamine (Luvox) – an antidepressant

Melatonin may reduce nifedipine's ability to lower blood pressure, which could lead to an increased heart rate and blood pressure level if these drugs are taken together.

Fluvoxamine slows the metabolism of melatonin, which may result in excessive sleepiness.

### **Black Cohosh**

Herbal action: Black cohosh is a root used to treat menopausal and PMS symptoms and menstrual cramps.

Because black cohosh may mimic the action of estrogen, anyone who's had cancer that's estrogen-sensitive such as breast, endometrial or ovarian should avoid using it. Because the root contains a blood-thinner, it should not be taken with blood-thinning medications.

### **Evening Primrose Oil**

Herbal Action: This herb may treat inflammatory conditions like PMS, asthma

and eczema.

Avoid taking evening primrose oil if you have epilepsy or schizophrenia or take a phenothiazine medication (such as Thorazine, Prolixin, Permitil, Serentil, Trilafon, Compazine, Phenergan or Promethegan).

### **Goldenseal**

Herbal Action: Applied topically, goldenseal is used to treat sores and inflamed mucous membranes. Internally, it may ease digestive complaints and relieve a sore throat.

Drug interactions: Pregnant women should avoid using goldenseal because it has been reported to cause uterine contractions. Nursing women and children are also advised not to take this botanical. Goldenseal has the potential to interfere with bloodthinning drugs. Topical goldenseal should not be combined with tretinoin (such as Retin-A).

### **Licorice**

Herbal Action: This herb is used to ease congestion, soothe indigestion and treat stomach and respiratory problems.

Drug interactions: If used in large amounts or for long periods of time, licorice may cause the body to retain sodium, lose potassium and increase blood pressure, counteracting the effect of blood pressure drugs (Adalat and Vasotec) used to treat angina, hypertension and congestive heart failure. Those on diuretics should check before taking licorice regularly, as it may cause potassium loss. Use of licorice can be particularly dangerous with digitalis drugs because if you lower potassium while taking these drugs, it can actually result in death. Licorice may also up the negative effects of corticosteroid treatments (like prednisone or Medrol), so they shouldn't be combined unless under a doctor's supervision. Others who should be careful: pregnant or nursing women, those with heart disease, high blood pressure, glaucoma, diabetes, kidney or liver

disease, and women taking oral contraceptives (because it may compound their side effects) or estrogen replacement therapy.

### **Milk Thistle**

Herbal Action: The seed extract is used for detoxification as well as to treat liver problems such as hepatitis and cirrhosis.

Drug Interactions: Some experts believe that milk thistle lessens the effectiveness of oral contraceptives by inhibiting a bacterial enzyme in the body that keeps blood levels of the medication stable.

### **Saw Palmetto**

Herbal Action: Saw palmetto is used to treat the symptoms of benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), or enlargement of the prostate, a health problem in men that typically includes urinary complaints.

Drug Interactions: Men should see a physician to rule out prostate cancer before self-treating for BPH. Those who are taking Proscar should be sure to talk to their doctor before using this herb concurrently.

### **Valerian**

Herbal Action: This root is used to treat insomnia and ease nervous tension.

Drug Interactions: Check with your doctor before combining valerian with drugs that can also cause drowsiness, including benzodiazepines (such as Xanax and Valium), anticonvulsants (such as Phenobarbital and Dilantin) and antidepressants (such as Prozac, Elavil and Tofranil) as well as alcohol. The herb may increase their sedative effects.

### **St. John's wort**

Avoid taking with any prescription medications. In particular, avoid taking St

John's wort and:

Antidepressants

HIV Protease inhibitors – used to treat HIV/AIDS

Non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors – used to treat HIV/Aids

Digoxin (Lanoxicaps, Lanoxin) – heart medication

Theophylline (Elixophyllin, Uniphyll) – an asthma medication

Cyclosporine (Neoral, Sandimmune) – an immunosuppressant

Chemotherapy

Oral Contraceptives

Nifedipine (Adalat, Procardia) and diltiazem (Cardizem, Dilacor) – blood

Pressure and heart disease medications

Warfarin (Coumadin) – blood-thinning medication

Alcohol

Tamoxifen (Nolvadex) – a cancer treatment and prevention medication

St John's wort has been shown to affect your body's metabolism of all of these drugs.

Many other drugs are likely to be affected, too. Until more is known about St John's

wort's ability to alter the metabolism of pharmaceutical medications, it's probably best

not to combine such medications with St John's Wort.