

A Guide to Surgery, Anesthesia, and Use of Herbal Medicines

Although, many herbal products claim to be “all-natural,” their use around the time of surgery can sometimes result in serious complications or adverse reactions with your anesthetic. ***You must stop taking all herbal products and diet pills at least two weeks before and after your surgery.***

The following serves as an illustration of potential adverse reactions with the use of some herbal products if taken around the time of surgery.

Cayenne

- ❖ Skin sores or blisters
- ❖ Decrease in body temperature in high doses

Echinacea

- ❖ May result in liver damage especially when used with steroids or methotrexate
- ❖ May decrease effectiveness of anti-cancer drugs

Ephedra (diet pills)

- ❖ Alteration in heart rate or blood pressure
- ❖ Possible drug interaction with monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOI), Oxytocin, Guanethedine

Feverfew

- ❖ Can thin blood and increase risk of bleeding
- ❖ Headache
- ❖ Stomach ulcers

Garlic

- ❖ May increase the effect of coumadin (blood thinner)

Ginger

- ❖ Decreases the effect of blood-clotting drugs, may increase bleeding time
- ❖ May cause excessive bleeding if taken with coumadin

Ginko

- ❖ May increase bleeding in patients on blood thinners (aspirin, NSAIDs, coumadin, heparin)

Ginseng

- ❖ Water retention, lethargy (with >15 grams per day)
- ❖ May increase heart rate or blood pressure when combined with other stimulants
- ❖ Breast pain
- ❖ Mania in patients on monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOI)
- ❖ Post-menopausal bleeding

Goldenseal

- ❖ May cause early contractions during pregnancy
- ❖ May effect fluid retention or blood pressure
- ❖ May cause neurological symptoms with overdose

Kava-kava

- ❖ Increases the effect of sedatives

- ❖ Can increase the effect of alcohol
- ❖ May escalate feelings of depression in patients with endogenous depression

Licorice

- ❖ May cause high blood pressure, low potassium, fluid retention
- ❖ Should not be used in patients with liver or kidney disease, or low potassium

Saw Palmetto

- ❖ May interfere with hormone therapies (birth control pills or estrogen replacement therapy)

St. John's Wart

- ❖ May extend the effects of anesthesia
- ❖ May increase light sensitivity

Valerian

- ❖ May increase the effect of sedatives
- ❖ May decrease the symptoms of sedative withdrawal including seizures