

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, and 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, which may increase bleeding time
- ◆ May cause excessive bleeding if taken with coumadin

Ginko

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

Ginseng

- ◆ Water retention and lethargy (with less than 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, and fluid retention
- ◆ Should not be used in patients with liver or kidney disease, or with 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