

## Herbal Supplements: Natural Doesn't Always Mean Safe

Herbal supplements have gained popularity over the years with people seeking natural alternatives to improve their health. While many people use herbal supplements with no problems and report they feel better with using them, they are not right for everyone. Anyone wishing to try herbal products should always consult her doctor first. Although they are labeled "natural" they can be dangerous taken in the wrong dose or mixed with certain medications or disease states.

### Taking Herbal Supplements with Other Medications

Herbal supplements can change the way your body reacts to medicine or over the counter products. If you take any of the following types of medications, it is very important to discuss use of supplements with your doctor first:

- Diabetes medications
- Cancer drugs
- Heart or high blood pressure medication
- Any medication used to treat a psychiatric condition such as antidepressants or anti-anxiety drugs
- Blood thinners
- Anti-seizure drugs

Furthermore, herbal supplements can make some existing health conditions worse even if you are not taking medication. Some of these conditions are:

- Enlarged prostate
- Epilepsy
- Glaucoma
- Thyroid conditions
- Liver problems
- Immune system problems
- High blood pressure or heart condition
- Diabetes
- Parkinson's disease
- Cancer
- Blood clotting disorders
- Psychiatric conditions

If, after discussing with your doctor, you decide to start taking an herbal supplement, try to educate yourself as much as possible. Some great places to find information are:

- The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/herbsataglance.htm>)
- The National Library of Medicine ([www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/herbalmedicine.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/herbalmedicine.html))
- The Dietary Supplements Labels Database (<http://dietarysupplements.nlm.nih.gov/dietary/>),
- The Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center ([www.mskcc.org/mskcc/html/11570.cfm](http://www.mskcc.org/mskcc/html/11570.cfm)).

### Reference:

"Using Herbal Supplements," Guido R. Zanni, PhD Published Online: Monday, December 13th, 2010 <http://www.pharmacytimes.com/publications/issue/2010/December2010/PatientEducation-1210>

## Foot Tips for Diabetics

### Take Care of Your Diabetes

Make healthy lifestyle choices to keep your blood sugar close to normal.

### Check Your Feet Every Day

You may have foot problems that you may not be aware of. Check your feet for cuts, sores, red spots, swelling, or infected toenails as part of your daily routine. If you have trouble bending over to see your feet, use a plastic mirror to help. You can also ask a family member to help you.

### Wash Your Feet Every Day

Wash your feet in warm, NOT HOT, water. Do not soak your feet because your skin will get dry. Before bathing or showering, test the water to make sure it is not too hot. You should use a thermometer or your elbow. Dry your feet well. Be sure to dry between your toes. Use talcum powder to keep the skin dry between the toes.

### Keep the Skin Soft and Smooth

Rub a thin coat of skin lotion or cream on the tops and bottoms of the feet. Do not put lotion between your toes, because this might cause infection.

### Trim your Toenails Each Week or When Needed

Trim your toenails with clippers after you wash and dry your feet. Trim the toenails straight across and smooth them with an emery board or nail file. DO NOT cut into the corners of the nail or rip off hangnails. If your nails are thick or yellowed, DO NOT cut your own nails; have a foot doctor trim them.

### Wear Shoes and Socks At All Times

Wear shoes and socks at all times. Do not walk barefoot, not even indoors. Always check the insides of your shoes to make sure the lining is smooth and there are no foreign objects in the shoe. Wear shoes that fit well.

### Protect Your Feet From Hot and Cold

Always wear shoes at the beach or on hot pavement. Put sunscreen on the tops of your feet. Choose padded socks to protect your feet and make walking more comfortable.

### Keep the Blood Flowing to Your Feet

Put your feet up when you are sitting. Wiggle your toes for 5 minutes, 2 or 3 times a day. Move your ankles up and down and in and out to improve blood flow in your feet and legs.

### Be More Active

Walking, dancing, swimming, and bicycling are good forms of exercise that are easy on the feet.

## Ask The Pharmacist

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