



Herbs and Supplements: Are They Safe? Do They Work?

Celebrating a Second Chance at Life
Survivorship Symposium

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HERBS AND SUPPLEMENTS:

ARE THEY SAFE? DO THEY HELP?

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BMT InfoNet
Virtual symposium April 22, 2021

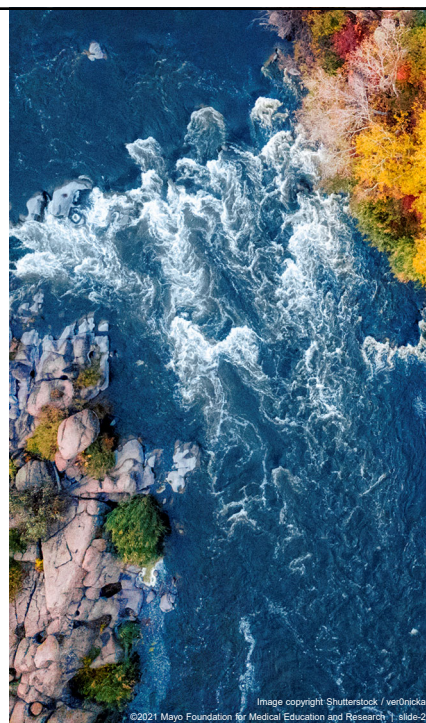


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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Discuss how herbs and supplements vary in potency and contamination
- Describe drug interactions that may occur with medications prescribed by a doctor
- List popular supplements that should be avoided by transplant survivors
- Describe how to find reliable information about the safety and effectiveness of herbs and supplements



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DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS VS PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION



- Prescription medications
 - Considered **unsafe** until **proven safe**
 - All prescription and non-prescription drugs are regulated by the FDA



- Dietary supplements – vitamins, minerals, herbs, food substances or extracts
 - Considered **safe** until **proven unsafe**
 - FDA can stop a company if they can prove it poses a significant risk

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PROBLEMS WITH SOME SUPPLEMENTS

- Contamination
 - Germs
 - Pesticides
 - Toxic heavy metals
- Do not contain what's on the label
 - Wrong amount
 - Wrong herbal
 - Wrong part of the plant



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CONCERNS FOR PATIENTS UNDERGOING TREATMENT

- Interference with chemotherapy
- Drug interactions
- Skin sensitivities
- Impaired organ function

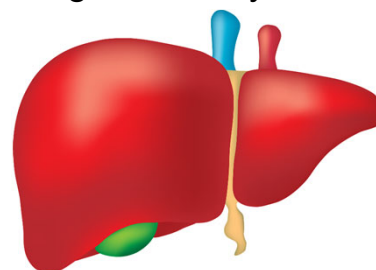


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THE ROLE THE LIVER PLAYS

- Powerhouse of filtration
- Filters blood removing toxins and old or damaged cells
- Produces proteins important for clotting
- Breaks down fat, protein and carbohydrates along with many medications



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HOW TO READ A SUPPLEMENT LABEL

- Required to have a supplement facts label
- Avoid terms like “proprietary blend”
- Watch for vague dosing recommendations (1-2 tabs 3-4 times daily)

Supplement Facts

Serving Size 1 Tablet
Serving per container 100

	Amount per Serving	% Daily Value
Vitamin C	250 mcg	278%
Vitamin D	20 mcg	100%
Vitamin E	75 mg	500%
Boron	150 mcg	*
Herbal Blend	100 mg	*
Rose Hips (flower)	50 mg	*
Elderberry (Root)	50 mg	*

* Daily Value not established

Other Ingredients: Cellulose, silica, sodium selenate

± These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.

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SUPPLEMENTS TO DISCUSS

- Probiotics
- Curcumin
- Omega-3
- Elderberry
- Glucosamine
- Garlic
- Milk Thistle
- Black Cohosh
- St. John's Wort
- Saw Palmetto
- Valerian

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PROBIOTICS

Obtained from	Most consist of non virulent bacteria that produce lactic acid such as Lactobacillus, Streptococcus, Bifidobacterium, or non pathogenic yeasts such as Saccharomyces boulardii
Reported use	Diarrhea, urinary tract infections, allergies, obesity, cancer treatment-associated side effects
Possible interactions	May affect liver enzymes
Possible side effects	Infections
Take away	Do not take if you have a low white blood cell count Generally safe in food and drink

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CURCUMIN (TURMERIC)

Obtained from	Underground part of the stem commonly used as a spice
Reported use	Cancer prevention, infections, inflammation, kidney stones, stomach and intestinal gas
Possible interactions	Blood thinners, chemotherapy, tacrolimus, blood pressure medications
Possible side effects	Nausea, hepatitis, rash
Take away	Generally safe in food and tea in moderation. Avoid supplements until discussing with your healthcare provider if you are on prescription medications

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OMEGA- 3

Obtained from	Fish oil, krill oil, cod liver oil, flaxseed oil, linseed oil, walnuts, chia seeds
Reported use	Lowering cholesterol, managing depression, preventing heart disease, reducing fatty deposits in arteries, preventing cancer
Possible interactions	Warfarin, steroids
Possible side effects	Diarrhea, nausea, abdominal pain, fishy aftertaste
Take away	Don't take if you are taking blood thinners or corticosteroids Generally safe in recommended doses.

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ELDERBERRY

Obtained from	Flowering shrub known as Sambucus or Elder
Reported use	Cancer, circulatory disorders, cold and flu symptoms, constipation, promote urination, HIV/AIDS, immune-stimulation, inflammation, respiratory infections
Possible interactions	Hypoglycemic medications, diuretics, laxatives
Possible side effects	Nausea/vomiting, possible pancreatitis. Raw or unripe elderberries contain cyanogenic glycosides (cyanide toxicity)
Take away	Do not take if you are diabetic. Ensure appropriate part of the plant is contained in product

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GLUCOSAMINE

Obtained from	Exoskeletons of shrimp, lobster and crabs; or produced synthetically
Reported use	Inflammation, osteoarthritis, TMJ (temporomandibular joint disorder)
Possible interactions	Anticoagulants/antiplatelets
Possible side effects	Nausea, rash, increased intraocular pressure, reduced glucose tolerance, hypotension
Take away	Avoid if you have liver disease or are on blood thinners. Caution with shellfish allergies, glaucoma or diabetes. Otherwise generally safe in recommended doses

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GARLIC

Obtained from	Bulb or clove of the garlic plant
Reported use	Cardiovascular disease, high cholesterol, hypertension, infections, cancer
Possible interactions	Warfarin, anticoagulants, HIV medications, insulin, some immunosuppressants
Possible side effects	Headache, offensive odor/bad breath, upset stomach, sweating, low blood sugar, increased bleeding risk
Take away	Discontinue at least 7 days prior to surgery; do not take if you are on blood thinners, immunosuppression or HIV medications. Use caution with cholesterol medications

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MILK THISTLE

Obtained from	From the seed, pod or fruit of milk thistle plant
Reported use	Cirrhosis, liver toxicity, hepatitis, liver disease, cancer prevention
Possible interactions	Medications metabolized by the liver, sirolimus, haloperidol, aripiprazole,
Possible side effects	Sweating, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, nosebleed
Take away	Discuss with your medical provider; caution use with most other medications.

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BLACK COHOSH

Obtained from	Root of the black cohosh plant
Reported use	Menopausal symptoms, premenstrual syndrome, painful or heavy menstruation, hot flashes
Possible interactions	Tamoxifen, chemotherapy medications, simvastatin, liver metabolized medications
Possible side effects	Nausea, liver failure/dysfunction, slow heartbeat, low sodium
Take away	Do not use if you have any issues with your liver or history of breast cancer.

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ST. JOHNS WORT

Obtained from	Flowering part of the plant
Reported use	Depression, fatigue, insomnia, pain, PMS, seasonal affective disorder, wound healing
Possible interactions	HIV medications, cyclosporin, tacrolimus, diltiazem, nifedipine, warfarin, headache medicines antidepressants, some chemotherapy such as irinotecan, docetaxel, imatinib, methotrexate
Possible side effects	Photosensitivity, headache, nausea, dry mouth, sleepiness, neuropathy
Take away	Avoid if you are on any other medications

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SAW PALMETTO

Obtained from	Dwarf palm that grows in coastal lands
Reported use	Benign prostatic hypertrophy (BPH), prostate cancer, promote urination, inflammation
Possible interactions	Blood thinners, NSAIDS (ibuprofen)
Possible side effects	Diarrhea, fatigue, headache, decreased libido, rhinitis
Take away	Do not take if you are on blood thinners or at risk for bleeding

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VALERIAN

Obtained from	From the root of the valerian plant
Reported use	Anxiety, insomnia, muscle spasms, menopausal symptoms
Possible interactions	Barbiturates, benzodiazepines (lorazepam), haloperidol, medications that are processed by the liver
Possible side effects	Bitter taste, drowsiness, depression, diarrhea, headache, heart palpitations, impaired alertness, irritability, liver toxicity, sweating
Take away	Avoid if taking other prescription medications Stop at least 1 week before surgery Some patients experience withdrawal after stopping Avoid in liver or pancreatic disease

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OTHER HERBALS TO AVOID

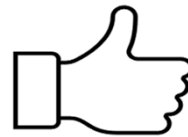
- Alfalfa
- Borage
- Chaparral
- Coltsfoot
- Comfrey
- DHEA
- Ephedra or MaHuang
- Groundsel
- Kava Kava
- Laetrile
- Licorice Root
- Lobelia
- L-tryptophan
- Pennyroyal
- Sassafras
- Yohimbe

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THINGS TO LOOK FOR

- USP or NF on the label
- Find a product that is using only the part of the plant thought to be helpful
- Look for a way to contact the company if you have questions or concerns
- Try to avoid mixtures of many different supplements/ingredients
- Start only one product at a time
- Follow the dosage limits on the label

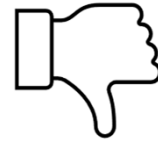


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THINGS TO AVOID WHEN CONSIDERING SUPPLEMENTS

- Megadosing
- Thinking Natural = Safe
- Products that claim to work like prescription drugs
- Products advertised through mass emails
- Products marketed mainly in a foreign language
- Products that promise weight loss, body-building or enhanced sexual performance



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MY ADVICE

- Avoid herbal and dietary supplements if you are undergoing active chemotherapy
- Avoid herbal and dietary supplements for the first 100 days after stem cell transplant
- Use caution when taking herbal supplements while on immune suppression; do not start without talking to a physician first
- When trying new products try one at a time
- Look for reputable manufacturers
- Always include your herbal and dietary supplements when giving your medication list to your provider!!

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WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

- National Institutes of Health Office of Dietary Supplements
 - Website: <https://ods.od.nih.gov/HealthInformation/makingdecisions.sec.aspx>
- National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH)
 - Website: <https://nccih.nih.gov/>
- Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center about Herbs and Botanicals
 - Website: www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/integrative-medicine/about-herbs-botanicals-otherproducts

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THANK YOU

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Questions?

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