

The possible dangers of taking natural supplements

Whilst there are a few supplements that are recommended specifically for reduction of blood pressure, I would like to discuss ALL the common ones taken for cardiovascular disease as a whole, as many advertise multiple benefits.

The following supplements are most commonly taken to reduce symptoms of cardiovascular disease in general and may or may not target blood pressure specifically. I will first list those preparations which **MAY BE HARMFUL AND SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN** and then will emphasize the ones that have been proven to have beneficial effects on blood pressure.

What NOT to take:

- Licorice
- Ephedra
- Any supplement containing excessive amounts of caffeine
- Ginkgo
- Arnica
- Bitter orange
- Blue cohosh
- Dong quai
- Ginseng
- Guarana
- Pennyroyal oil
- Scotch broom
- Senna
- Southern bayberry
- St John's wort
- Yohimbine



Conclusion: This study lists the herbal products that may cause hypertension and should be considered when a patient undergoes plastic surgery to reduce perioperative morbidity related to the herbal supplements.

What you CAN take:



ASIAN GINSENG (PANAX GINSENG) commonly prescribed by herbalists as an adaptogen to support overall health and boost the immune system. Asian ginseng is claimed to improve blood pressure control and lower glucose and lipid levels. The biggest safety concern with Asian ginseng is that it can induce activity of a specific enzyme (Cytochrome P450 or CYP450), which is commonly required for many metabolic pathways associated with medications. This increased activity then lowers the bioavailability of certain medications such as Warfarin which is a commonly prescribed blood thinner, therefore making the medication less effective. If a person is already on medications to lower blood sugar then he/she should be advised that his blood glucose levels may drop too low so he may need to adjust those medications.



ASTRAGALUS (ASTRAGALUS MEMBRANACEUS) is frequently used as an overall 'heart booster' and prevention of heart failure. Small observational studies have reported an improvement in cardiac output in patients with congestive heart failure and ischemic disease (narrowing of blood vessels), but high-quality clinical trials are lacking as is data regarding the safety profile.



FLAXSEEDS AND FLAXSEED OIL (LINUM USITATISSIMUM). Flaxseeds are high in alpha-linoleic acid, which is one of the essential omega 3 fatty acids and therefore highly recommended as a supplement for cardiovascular disease. The oil has many potential beneficial effects with regard to high cholesterol levels, coronary artery disease, inflammation and metabolic syndrome. The seeds are frequently used to alleviate constipation because of the high content of soluble fibre in the husk, which is obviously removed when it is made into oil. I often prescribe flaxseeds (whole or ground) for constipation and the oil in patients with cardiovascular disease to help with inflammation and improvement of circulation.



GARLIC (ALLIUM SATIVUM). Garlic has been known for its therapeutic properties for centuries in many medical conditions, including cardiovascular diseases, cancers and infections. In particular it was postulated to have a beneficial effect on high blood pressure and reduction of blood cholesterol and triglyceride (fats) levels. It was also considered a major contributor to the anti-clotting mechanisms to help prevent blood clot formation. Caution must be exercised if you are already on blood thinning medications such as Warfarin or aspirin as garlic supplements will have an additive effect on these medications. Eating garlic in food will be fine.