



Complementary and Alternative Medicines –



★ If a patient is taking ANY Complementary or Alternative Medicine (CAM), please contact Drug Information Centre ext. 5208 for information as there may be risk of interaction with medications given in hospital.

★ Examples of some of the known side effects / interactions of commonly used CAM are shown below.

★ The implications of possible interactions need to be considered if ceasing a CAM as well as if adding another drug.

★ **Note: This list is not complete -contact the Drug Information Centre for further details of these and other CAM.**

Medicine	Caution
Dong quai	May increase risk of bleeding. May interact with warfarin.
Echinacea	Should not be used in anti-immune diseases. Interacts with immunosuppressants.
Ephedra	May cause cardiovascular instability, has side effects & interactions of ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, etc. May interact with many drugs including dexamethasone, digoxin, theophylline, cough & cold preps.
Garlic	May increase bleeding time (cease 1-2 weeks prior to surgery), potentiate hypoglycaemia. May interact with warfarin, antidiabetic drugs/insulin, oral contraceptives, some laboratory tests.
Ginger	May affect BP, potentiate hypoglycemia, cause CNS depression (high doses) & increased bleeding risk (high doses).
Ginkgo biloba	May increase bleeding time (cease 1-2 weeks prior to surgery), lower seizure threshold. May interact with anticoagulant & antiplatelet drugs, insulin, anaesthetics.
Ginseng	May increase bleeding time, cause hypoglycaemia, increase BP. May interact with warfarin, antidiabetic drugs, furosemide, some laboratory tests.
Glucosamine	May cause hyperglycaemia. May interact with some chemotherapy drugs.
Guarana	May have the side effects & interactions of caffeine. May interact with some lab tests.
Kava	May potentiate the sedative effect of anaesthetic drugs, cause liver toxicity. May interact with phenothiazines, MAOIs.
Valerian	May potentiate the sedative effect of CNS depressants, anaesthetic drugs.
St Johns Wort (hypericum)	May be considered similar to other antidepressants such as fluoxetine, etc. Interacts with many drugs, including warfarin, cyclosporin, tacrolimus and oral contraceptives

References:

JAMA 286(2) 11 2001 208-216; Natural Medicine Comprehensive Database; Altmedex (Micromedex Healthcare Series)