

So you want to use an herbal medicine?

1. About herbal medicines

- Herbal remedies are medicines. Use them as carefully as you would use conventional medicines.
- Natural does not mean “safe”. Like all medicines, herbal medicines can cause side effects.
- Be cautious of statements such as; “this remedy is 100% safe” or “this remedy has no side effects” or “this will not interfere with your prescribed medicines”. They are unlikely to be true.
- The very young and the elderly may be more sensitive to the effects of some herbal medicines.

2. Before you take herbal medicines

Taking other medicines

- Herbal medicines may affect the way some other medicines work. Also some other medicines may affect the way herbal medicines work. If you are taking other medicines you should consult your doctor before you start using herbal medicines.
- You should not stop taking your prescribed medicines or change the dose without consulting your doctor.
- If you consult a herbal medicine practitioner, please tell him or her about any medicines you are already taking.
- Check with your doctor, before taking herbal medicines if
 - you have liver or kidney disease
 - you are taking any medicines for diabetes, epilepsy, blood pressure, blood thinning, HIV, chemotherapy or anti-rejection drugs following a transplant.

Pregnancy and breast feeding

Check with your doctor, pharmacist or herbal medicine practitioner before taking herbal medicines if

- you are pregnant, might become pregnant or think you may be pregnant.
- you are breast-feeding or planning to breast-feed.

If you become pregnant while taking herbal medicines you should consult your doctor.

3. How to take herbal medicines

Follow the instructions supplied with the medicine. Do not take more than the recommended dose.

Take conventional medicines at least 1 hour before any herbal medicine.

If your symptoms persist or get worse do not delay in seeking expert medical advice.

Before planned surgery

You should tell the anaesthetist about any medicines herbal medicines you are taking.

You should stop taking all herbal medicines a week before a general anaesthetic

4 Possible side effects

- All herbal medicines can cause side-effects, although not everybody gets them.
- The information supplied with registered herbal medicines (THR) should tell you what side-effects have been reported by other people who have used the medicine
- If you notice any side-effects or if any of the side effects gets serious or lasts longer than a few days, stop using the herbal medicine and consult your doctor.
- Do not use your herbal medicine for more than three months without a break of at least one month (unless your doctor or herbal practitioner tells you it is all right to do so).

Child safety

As with any medicines, keep herbal medicines out of sight and reach of children.

5. Further information

Ask your doctor, pharmacist or herbal medicine practitioner for more information and specific advice about using herbal medicines.