

Chinese and Western Herbal Medicine: A Guide to Potential Risks and Drug Interactions

Herbs	Drug Interactions	Adverse potential
<p>Bupleurum spp. (Chinese Thorough wax, Chai Hu)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primary use: symptoms associated with common cold, flu, liver disorders... ▪ Primary action: Bupleurum stimulates the immune system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ None Known 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some side effects of this herb include increased bowel movement, and drowsiness.
<p>Danshen (Salvia miltiorrhiza)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primary usage: promotes blood flow and treat cardiovascular diseases i.e. angina pectoris, acute MI. ▪ Primary actions: scavenges free radicals, inhibit platelets aggregation, and promote vasoactive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Warfarin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decreases warfarin clearance and increases its bioavailability. Case report of hemorrhage.
<p>Dong Quai (Angelica Sinensis, Dong Gui, Chinese Angelica, Tan Kuei)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primary use: It is most often used in oriental medicine for menstrual problems. ▪ Dong Quai can also be widely found in traditional formulation for pain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Warfarin 	<p>Dong Quai is safe for most adults. Women who are pregnant or breast-feeding should not take it without consulting their healthcare provider.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women with hormone sensitive cancers such as breast, uterine, or ovarian cancer and those with endometriosis or uterine fibroids should also exercise caution.
<p>Ephedra Sinensis (Cao Mahuang, Ma huang, Yellow astringent)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MAOI, caffeine, decongestants, stimulants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ephedra and MAOI can cause dangerously high blood pressure. FDA proposed a dosage limit of 8 mg every 6 hours (or a

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primary use: Ma huang is well known as a weight loss pill in the West (i.e. herbal fen-phen), but it is solely used in traditional oriental medicine for respiratory conditions such as asthma, bronchitis, and bronchospasm. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ People with the following condition should not take Ephreda: Chest pains, cardiovascular disease, anxiety, eating disorder, and thyroid problems. 	<p>total of 24 mg per day) and not more than 7 days of continuous use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ephedra, by itself, is not recommended for most people. It is never used alone in TCM. ▪ Risks of prolonged usage and high dosages consumption include high blood pressure, stroke, heart attacks, seizures, irregular heart beat, loss of consciousness, and death. ▪ Less severe adverse symptoms include: dizziness, restlessness, anxiety, irritability, heart pounding, headache, a loss of appetite, nausea, and vomiting.
<p>Feverfew (Tanacetum parthenium)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primary use: migraine prophylaxis ▪ Primary actions: vasoactive effects, anti-inflammatory, inhibit platelet aggregation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Antiplatelet drugs ▪ NSAIDS ▪ Ticlopidine ▪ Clonidine ▪ Tricyclic antidepressants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential antiplatelet effects ▪ Antagonizes serotonin release, may potentiate the effects of other serotonin antagonists.
<p>Garlic (Allium sativum)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primary use: reduce low density (LDL) cholesterol, elevate high density (HDL) cholesterol, mildly reduce blood pressure, and improve blood circulation. Garlic is also been used as an antibacterial/antiviral (H. pylori). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Garlic can INCREASE the risk for bleeding when combined with: Warfarin, aspirin, clopidogrel (Plavix), and enoxaparin (Lenvenox). ▪ Garlic may DECREASE the effectiveness of: cyclosporine, and BCP. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Garlic is generally safe for most adults. ▪ Raw garlic can cause: a burning sensation in the mouth or stomach, heartburn, bad-breath, gas, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primary actions: inhibit platelet nitric-oxide-synthase, enhance fibrinolytic and antiplatelet activity, and antiviral & antibacterial activities. 		
<p>Ginger (zingiberis rhizome)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primary Use: a spice, ginger is used for sea-sick and motion sickness, and loss of appetite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase risk of bleeding when combined with blood thinners such as warfarin, and aspirin. ▪ Ginger may interfere with medications for controlling blood sugar, blood pressure, and stomach acid. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Most people tolerate ginger well.
<p>Ginseng (Panax species)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primary use: vigor, well-being and longevity, MI, angina pectoris, CHF, lowering blood sugar. ▪ Primary action: It is thought that ginseng contains a variety of chemicals called ginsenosides that are responsible for its effects. In herbal therapy, Ginseng is often used as an adaptogenic herb, which means that it can regulate a hypo or hyper functioning system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Warfarin ▪ Alcohol ▪ Phenelzine; MAOI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decreased INR ▪ Increased alcohol clearance ▪ headache, tremor, mania
<p>Hawthorn (Crataegus oxyacantha)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primary use: Hawthorn is often prescribed for cardiovascular problems including heart failure. ▪ Primary action: increase cardiac output, increase nerve signal transmission, and relax blood vessels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hawthorne may increase the effects of cardiovascular medication such as: ▪ Digoxin, enalapril, metoprolol, nitroglycerin, propranolol, Theophylline, caffeine, papverine. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hawthorn is safe for most people. Occasional reactions to Hawthorn include: nausea, stomach upset, fatigue, sweating, headache, and dizzines

<p>Kava kava (Piper methysticum)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primary use: sedative, anxiety, reducing withdrawal symptoms from benzodiazepines. ▪ Kava-lactones are believed to affect the central nervous system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Kava can INCREASE SIDE EFFECTS of the following drugs: alcohol, sedatives, sleeping pills, and antipsychotics. -diazepam (Valium), -alprazolam (Xanax), -Halcion, Phenobarbital ▪ Kava may INCREASE RISKS of liver damage when combined with a number of medications: acarbose, amiodarone, atorvastatin, diclofenac, isoniazid, itraconazole, ketoconazole, leflunomide, lovastatin, methotrexate, nevirapine, niacin, nifampin, ritonavir, simvastatin, tacrine, tamoxifen, terbinafine, valproic acid, zileuton... ▪ Kava can INCREASE the risk of abnormal muscle movements when combined with certain meds: chlorpromazine, fluphenazine, haloperidol, metoclopramide, thioridazine, and thiothixene. ▪ Kava can DECREASE the effectiveness of dopamine. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The potential for herb-drug interaction is much greater when Kava is combined with western drugs. One should not take Kava while one is pregnant or breastfeeding, depressed, or have liver disease such as hepatitis.
<p>Licorice (Glycyrrhiza glaba)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Licorice is a very popular herb in TCM formulations, often used to ameliorate or neutralize potentially toxic herbs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Licorice DECREASE high blood pressure medications such as: procardia, cardizem, tenormin, lasix. In addition, it also decrease the effects of hormone therapies i.e. estrogen, tamoxifen, birth control pills. ▪ Licorice INCREASE the side effects of prednisone, and other steroid medications, MAOI, insulin, ibuprofen, naproxen, lovastatin ketoconazole, Allegra, Halcion, Seconal, and other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High dosage or long-term use of licorice can lead to high blood pressure, water and sodium retention, and decreased potassium in the blood. ▪ Potassium depleting drugs such as furosemide, ethacrynic acid, grape fruit juice, and laxatives can increase the side effects of licorice.

	drugs that are metabolized by CYP450.	
Senna, cascara (laxative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Possible interference with any intestinally absorbed drug 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decreased drug availability
St. John's Wort (Hypericum perforatum) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primary use: mild-moderate depression, possibly effective for anxiety. ▪ Primary actions: hyperforin and hypericin act on chemical receptors to regulate mood. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SJW can significantly decrease availability and absorption of many drugs by inducing liver enzyme CYP 450 and inhibiting, including drugs for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SSRI's • AIDS • Anxiety • Asthma • Birth control (OCP) • Cholesterol lowering • Depression • Heart • Phenobarbital, dilantin, tegretol, Xanax. ▪ SJW can increase side effects of many drugs, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allergy (Allerga) ▪ Depression (Zoloft, MAOIs, Paxil, Serone) ▪ Migraine (Imitrex, Frova, Amerge, Maxalt) ▪ SJW has also been reported to interact with anesthesia. It is recommended that patients discontinue SJW two weeks prior to surgery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ By far, SJW has been the most commonly reported herb causing herb/drug interactions. Short-term use appears to be safe for most consumers. In some patients, SJW can cause insomnia, restlessness, vivid dreams, anxiety, irritability, stomach upset, fatigue, dry mouth, dizziness, headache, and tingling. ▪ SJW can cause skin to become extra sensitive to the sun, especially in light-skinned individuals.
Yohimbine (sexual dysfunction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tricyclic antidepressants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hypertension