Cancer Surgery: Precautions for Use of Dietary/Herbal Supplements

Tell your health care team if you use any herbs, supplements, vitamins, minerals or other remedies. Bring them in their original bottle or container with you to each doctor's appointment.

Many dietary/herbal supplements and other natural medicines or products can cause complications with surgery. It important to know that if a supplement or product is labeled as "natural," it does not mean it is safe or does not have harmful side effects. Supplements or products may interact with your anesthesia or other medicines used during your surgery or cause bleeding, clotting or blood pressure problems.

Limited information is available about some dietary/herbal supplements and natural medicines or products. Many of these products have not been tested in clinical studies in humans and the effects they may cause are unknown.

For these reasons, we recommend that you do not take dietary/herbal supplements or other natural products for at least 2 weeks before your surgery. Foods with these substances are normally not harmful, if taken in limited amounts as part of your regular diet.

The following list includes supplements or products that can cause problems with your surgery. **This is not a complete list. Dietary/herbal supplements may be known by other names. It is important to read package labels and ingredient lists carefully. Talk to your health care team about your use of dietary/herbal supplements and other natural medicines or products.**

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

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Aloe	Essiac (sheep sorrel)	Marijuana
Astragalus	Evening primrose	Melatonin
Berberine	Evodia	Pomegranate
Bilberry	Fennel	Pseudoginseng (Panax)
Bishop's Weed (Goutweed)	Feverfew	Quercetin
Black Pepper	Fish oil: more than 3g/ day	Red clover
Black tea	Flaxseed	Reishi mushrooms
Blue-green Algae	Garlic	Saw palmetto
Burdock Root	GBC, BD, GHB	Schisandra
Cat's Claw	Ginger	Selenium
Cayenne	Ginkgo	St. John's Wort
Chamomile	Ginseng	Tahitian noni
Chondroitin	Glucosamine	Tiratricol
Coleus	Goldenseal	Tree Turmeric
CoQ10	Green tea	Turmeric (curcumin)
Danshen	Guggul	Valerian
DHEA	Higenamine	Vitamin a
Dong quai	Hu zhang	Vitamin e
Echinacea	Kava	White pepper
Ephedra	Mangosteen	Wolfberry (Goji Juice)
		Yohimbe

It is important to talk openly with your healthcare provider, pharmacist or nurse about all dietary/herbal supplements or natural medicines or products you use before your surgery. To keep you safe, it is important for your health care team to know how often you take supplements and how much you take.

If you are unable to stop your use of supplements or products at least 2 weeks before your surgery, bring them with you in their original bottle or container to show to your healthcare provider.

If you follow a vegetarian or vegan diet and have been losing weight, or have a poor appetite, talk to your surgeon or nurse about seeing a dietitian.