

Herbs versus Drugs

The Benefits of Using Herbal Medicine First

For thousands of years, human beings relied primarily on herbs for healing. But with the advent of modern pharmaceutical medicine, many people felt that there was no longer a need for herbal medicine—science had triumphed over nature to create superior remedies. However, today there has been a renewed interest in herbal medicine. This has been demonstrated by the rapid growth of the herbal industry in recent years. In 2020 alone, the sales of herbal dietary supplements increased by 17.3% and the market for herbal remedies continues to expand.

Pharmaceutical Problems

This growth is partially fueled by the recognition that modern drugs have many side effects. The commercials promoting them verify this. However, the problem is far worse than most people realize, because illness caused by medical treatments (iatrogenic disease) are the 6th leading cause of death in the United States. A recent analysis estimates 128,000 Americans die each year as a result of taking medications as prescribed. This is nearly five times the number of people killed by overdosing on prescription painkillers and heroin.

It's the newer drugs that are the most problematic. Safety studies are usually short-lived, only 6-8 weeks, and many harmful side effects show up only after months of use. The majority of side effects aren't discovered until a drug has been in the marketplace for three to five years and half of all new drugs are withdrawn within ten years as their harmful side effects become apparent.



Herbal Safety

In contrast, the majority of herbs found in the marketplace have been in use for hundreds, and sometimes thousands, of years. This is ample time for multiple practitioners to observe their safety and efficacy. And evaluating the safety of an herb based on its long history of use is a perfectly valid approach.

Nearly all the foods we eat have never been scientifically researched to prove they are safe. We base our trust in them on generations of human experience.

The FDA uses the term GRAS (generally-recognized as safe) to designate foods, spices, and herbs that have a long history of safe use and this fits most commercially available herbs. It's also important to realize, that in spite of claims to the contrary, the herb and supplement industry is highly regulated. The FDA has the power to remove any herb or supplement from the marketplace it deems to be unsafe and it has done exactly that many times.

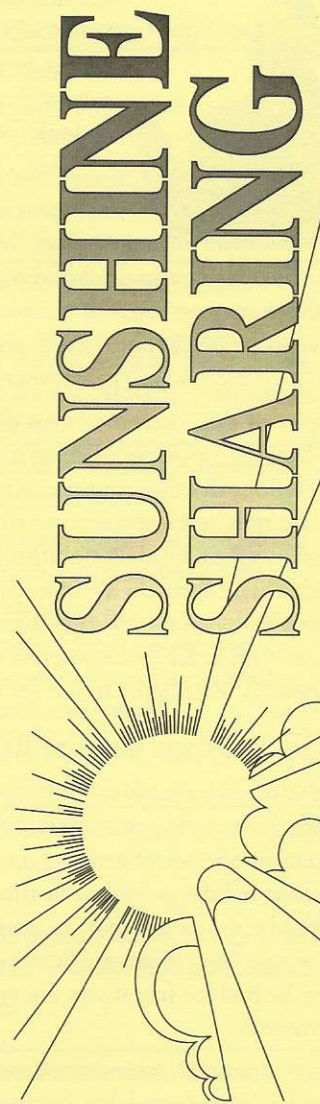
Many of the herbs the FDA has removed from the marketplace, such as Chinese ephedra and chaparral, actually had fewer negative effects than many over-the-counter medications, such as aspirin and acetaminophen. They were removed because they were being used for purposes they hadn't historically been proven and supplements are held to a higher safety standard than drugs.

Here's why. The safety of a drug is determined using a risk versus benefit model. If the potential benefit of a drug outweighs the risks it poses, it is deemed safe. Since millions of dollars haven't been invested in proving the efficiency of herbs, the FDA does not recognize any potential benefits. Therefore, any perceived risk is unacceptable in the herbal industry, making the safety standard higher for herbs than it is for drugs.

The Advantages of Herbs

Herbs are very effective in promoting health. We have hundreds and sometimes thousands of years of human use to draw on. Most people don't realize it, but about half of all pharma-

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Your guide to better health the natural way.

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Important Notice

The information in *Sunshine Sharing* is for educational purposes only and should not be used to diagnose and treat diseases. If you have a health problem, we recommend you consult a competent health practitioner before embarking on any course of treatment.

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ceutical drugs are based on compounds originally derived from plants, and pharmaceutical companies routinely research compounds found in plants to look for new drugs.

Of course, when they find these compounds, they isolate them and modify them so they can patent them.

They can't patent a natural substance, so there's no profit in spending all the money on research necessary to get FDA approval. So, this drive to create chemical medications isn't done for safety and efficacy, it's done because that's where the profits are found.

In spite of this, there are herbs that do have a lot of scientific studies backing up some of their traditional uses. Much of this research is done in other countries where herbs are used within the health care system. However, even when this data is lacking, most herbs have well-established traditional uses, which can be uncovered with a little research. This does not mean that everything you read about herbs on the internet is accurate or has historical basis. Herbalists with practical experience are the best sources available to understand what herbs to use for individual health problems.

Other Herbal Advantages

Herbal medicine is still the primary means of healthcare for about 75–80% of the world population. According to the World Health Organization, the use of herbal remedies world-wide exceeds that of conventional drugs by two to three times. One of the reasons this might be the case is that the cost of modern pharmaceuticals can be staggering. Plant medicines are far less expensive. They can even be had for free if you know how to identify and harvest them yourself.

There's also an environmental benefit to herbs. Herbal medicines are completely biodegradable, but many pharmaceuticals and their metabolites are not biodegradable. In a recent study conducted by the Environmental Protection Agency, samples of wastewater from 50 large-size wastewater treatment plants nationwide were tested for 56 drugs including oxycodone, high-blood pressure medications, and over-the-counter drugs like Tylenol and ibuprofen. More than half the samples tested positive for at least 25 of the drugs monitored. The long term environmental impact of this has yet to be determined.

The Unique Beneficial Actions of Herbs

The actions of modern drugs are primarily focused on providing symptomatic relief. This includes actions such as easing pain, suppressing coughs, killing microbes, and replacing hormones. While there are many herbs that provide symptomatic relief, this isn't the primary focus of traditional herbal medicine. In fact, in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) fast-acting, symptom-relieving remedies are considered *inferior* medicine.

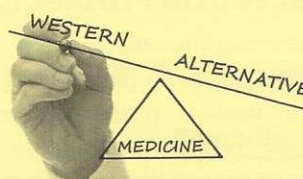
While easing symptoms can be helpful, symptomatic-relief doesn't necessarily result in a restoration of good health. That's why many people who start taking drugs wind up taking them for the rest of their lives. What TCM considers *superior* medicines are those which gradually restore balance and health to the human

body and drugs simply don't do this. However, herbs do, meaning there are benefits to using herbs that cannot be duplicated using modern drugs.

For example, there are many herbs which improve the function of the immune system. There are no drugs that can duplicate this action. Another example is the herbal concept of an alterative or blood purifier, an idea that is completely foreign to pharmaceutical medicine. Alteratives gently detoxify the body, helping to improve overall health and resolve the underlying cause of many illnesses.

Another example of a major superior medicine concept found in traditional herbalism is the tonic. A tonic is a health-building remedy that gradually improves the structure and or function of various body parts and organs, such as the brain, liver, or kidneys. While there are foods that have a tonic effect on the body, there are no drugs that act as tonics.

We've Got it Backwards



Given the fact that herbs are safer, less expensive, and provide health-building benefits drugs cannot, we have things backward in our society. We should think of nutrition (diet and supplements) and herbs

as our primary means of health care and drugs, medications, and surgery should be considered alternative medicine. It is just smarter to try the safest, least toxic, least invasive, and gentlest remedies first, and save the stronger, more toxic, and more invasive remedies as backup or alternative methods.

To help you get started using herbs and nutrition as your primary means of health care consult the following two tables. The first table lists the actions of common medications and what they do, with the herbs and nutrients you can use as primary remedies along with the drugs that have these actions. The best remedies are bolded and the numbered categories indicate similar actions between groups of herbal remedies and drugs.

The second table defines the unique beneficial actions of herbs, the herbs and nutrients that support these actions and suggestions for how to use them. These remedies are superior remedies that help to rebuild health when used with appropriate dietary and lifestyle changes. To use this table find the action that fits the area that needs improvement and pick a corresponding remedy.

Additional Help and Information

For more information about using herbal remedies and nutritional supplements as primary health care, contact the person who gave you this newsletter. You can also consult the following resources:

Strategies for Health by Steven Horne

Modern Herbal Dispensary by Thomas Esaley and Steven Horne

Sources

- 1 health.usnews.com/health-news/patient-advice/articles/2016-09-27/the-danger-in-taking-prescribed-medications
- 2 herbalgram.org/news/press-releases/2021/record-breaking-us-herbal-supplement-sales-increase-in-2020/h
- 3 "Herbal Medicine: Current Status and the Future" by Sanjoy Kumar Pal and Yogeshwer Shukla, *Asian Pacific Journal of Cancer Prevention*, Vol 4, 2003
- 4 newrepublic.com/article/115883/drugs-drinking-water-new-epa-study-finds-more-we-knew

Herbs and Drug Alternatives for Symptomatic Relief

Action	Primary Herbal Care	Alternative Drug Care
Analgesics Ease pain (see also <i>anti-inflammatory</i>)	1 Meadowsweet, willow bark , wintergreen 2 California poppy, corydalis , hemp (CBD) , Jamaican dogwood 3 Turmeric , ginger, capsicum, clove	1 Aspirin 2 Opioids (hydrocodone, codeine, fentanyl) 3 Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
Antidepressants Ease depression and elevate mood	1 5-HTP, St. John's wort 2 Black cohosh, damiana , lemon balm, mimosa bark , rosemary, SAM-e	1 <i>SSRIs</i> : fluoxetine (Prozac), sertraline (Zoloft), paroxetine (Paxil) 2 <i>Others</i> : bupropion (Wellbutrin)
Antifungals Combat fungal infections	Black walnut, oregano , pau d' arco , thyme <i>Essential oils</i> : Cajeput , tea tree , lavender , lemon, thyme	Nystatin, ketoconazole, fluconazole
Anti-inflammatories Reduce inflammation	1 Licorice, yucca , wild yam 2 Turmeric , boswellia , hemp (CBD) , mangosteen, chamomile, cat's claw, omega-3 fatty acids , MSM	1 <i>Steroidal</i> : hydrocortisone, prednisone 2 <i>Non-steroidal (NSAID)</i> : Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin),
Antibiotics Combat bacterial infections	Baptisia, barberry rootbark, echinacea , garlic , goldenseal, Oregon grape, yerba mansa	Amoxicillin, azithromycin, cephalexin, levofloxacin, penicillin
Antacids Neutralize excess acid and ease acid indigestion	Aloe vera juice, baking soda (sodium bicarbonate), catnip , calcium, Digestive Bitters Formulas (gentian, orange peel, turkey rhubarb, goldenseal, angelica), magnesium	Aluminum hydroxide (Maalox), calcium carbonate (Tums), sodium bicarbonate (Alkasetzer)
Antihistamines Block the action of histamine to reduce allergic reactions	Bitter orange , burdock, ephedra , eyebright, mangosteen, Nettle leaf , quercitin , vitamin C	Cetirizine (Zyrtec), diphenhydramine (Benadryl), desloratadine (Clarinex) fexofenadine (Allegra)
Antispasmodics (Muscle Relaxant) Ease cramps and spasms	Black cohosh, black haw, cramp bark, kava kava , lobelia , magnesium , potassium, skunk cabbage, wild yam	Atropine, doazepam (Valium), hyoscyamine, scopolamine
Anxiolytics Ease anxiety and help a person relax	GABA, hemp (CBD) , kanna, kava kava , l-threonine, magnesium , passion flower , skullcap <i>Essential oils</i> : Jasmine, lavender , ylang ylang	Barbiturates (Phenobarbital), benzodiazepines (Diazepam, Lorazepam),
Asthma and COPD Inhalers Dilate the bronchials to ease asthma	1 Coltsfoot, ephedra, grindelia, lobelia , khella, yerba santa 2 Cordyceps , licorice , n-acetyl cystine <i>Essential oils (inhalation)</i> : Bergamot, chamomile , lavender , marjoram, orange, thyme	1 <i>Bronchodilators</i> : Albuterol, ephedrine 2 <i>Corticosteroids</i> : Budesonide, fluticasone
Blood Thinners (Anticoagulant) Reduce blood clotting	Alfalfa, butcher's broom , garlic , ginkgo, guggal lipids, melilot, nattokinase , vitamin E	Coumarins (Coumadin), heparins
Decongestants Ease mucus congestion in the lungs and sinuses	Elecampane, garlic , grindelia , horseradish , horehound, mullein, pine bark, yerba santa <i>Essential oils (inhalation)</i> : Eucalyptus , pine , rosemary, thyme	Ephedrine, pseudoephedrine (Contac, Sudafed)
Diuretics Remove excess fluid from the body	Buchu , cornsilk, cleavers, dandelion, goldenrod, juniper berries , parsley, uva ursi , watermelon seed	Acetazolamide, Furosemide (Lasix), hydrochlorothiazide
Expectorants Expel mucus from the lungs, help relieve coughs, and ease sinus congestion	Cherry bark , elecampane, garlic, grindelia, horehound , horseradish , pine bark , yerba santa <i>Essential oils (inhalation)</i> : Atlas cedarwood, bay leaf, eucalyptus , pine , rosemary , ravensara, ravintsara, thyme	Guaifenesin (Mucinex, Robitussin), potassium iodide
Hypoglycemics Lower blood sugar in diabetes	Berberine , bitter melon , chromium , cinnamon , fenugreek, goldenseal, gymnema , nopal , jambul, vanadium	Acarbose, dapagliflozin, empagliflozin, metformin
Hypotensives Lower blood pressure	1 Kava kava, lobelia , linden , motherwort 2 Magnesium , potassium 3 Beet root , l-arginine , magnesium, mistletoe , olive leaf 4 Capsicum , Co-Q10 , garlic , ginger, hawthorn	1 Beta blockers and alpha blockers 2 Calcium channel blockers 3 Vasodilators 4 Others (e.g. ace Inhibitors, angiotensin II blockers)
Laxatives Ease constipation	<i>Stimulant laxatives</i> : Buckthorn, butternut bark , cascara sagrada , Cape aloe, senna, Turkey rhubarb; <i>Bulk laxatives</i> : Apple pectin, flax seed, guar gum, oat bran, psyllium	Bisacodyl, lactulose, magnesium hydroxide, magnesium sulfate
Sedatives & Hypnotics Help induce sleep and maintain sleep	California poppy, GABA, hops , kava kava, l-theanine, magnesium , melatonin , passionflower , skullcap , valerian	Alprazolam (Xanax), eszopiclone (Lunestra), zolpidem (Ambien)

Herbal Tonics and Health Restorers

Action	Uses	Remedies
Adaptogens Help the body adapt to stress	Can be used to overcome effects of chronic stress, help to boost the immune system, help the body cope with harsh environmental conditions	American ginseng, Asian ginseng, ashwaganda , cordyceps , eleuthero , gynostemma, holy basil, maca, schizandra , suma
Adrenal Tonics Strengthen the adrenal glands	Help with recovery from chronic stress (burnout), help reduce inflammation and improve sex drive	American ginseng, borage , bee pollen, devil's club, licorice , pantothenic acid , vitamin B-complex , vitamin C
Alteratives (Blood Purifiers) Clear up toxins in the body	Useful for acute and chronic skin problems (e.g. rashes, eczema, psoriasis), help clear up morbid conditions (e.g. boils, abscesses), may help with cancer	Artichoke, barberry, burdock , chaparral, chickweed , dandelion, echinacea, milk thistle, Oregon grape , red clover , sarsaparilla, yellow dock, yucca
Antioxidants Reduce free radical damage	Helps protect the body from all forms of degenerative disease, helps counteract the aging process	Açaí, alpha lipoic acid, cat's claw, cocoa , Co-Q10, green tea, lycium, mangosteen , n-acetyl cysteine, rosemary , sea buckthorn, vitamin C , vitamin E
Cerebral Tonics Improve memory and brain function	Useful to aid concentration and focus for study, helpful for preventing or reversing memory loss with aging, may help with ADD	Bacopa , Chinese club moss (huperzine-A), ginkgo , gotu kola , l-threonine, magnesium, periwinkle, rosemary
Digestive Tonics Stimulate digestive secretions and appetite	Helpful for indigestion, lack of appetite, bitter taste in the mouth, gas and bloating, belching	Angelica, artichoke leaf, cardamom, chamomile , dandelion , gentian , ginger , orange peel, peppermint , rosemary
Immune Modulators Help to normalize immune responses	Helpful for calming down excessive immune reactions in autoimmune disorders and also aiding immunity in fighting infections and cancer	Black walnut, chaga, colostrum , hemp (CBD) , holy basil, licorice root , omega-3 fatty acids , probiotics, reishi mushroom, schizandra
Hepato-protectives Help protect the liver from toxins	Helpful for people exposed to chemicals and environmental pollution	Blessed thistle, dandelion, lycium, magnesium, milk thistle , schisandra , sea buckthorn, turmeric, vitamin B-complex , vitamin C
Immune Stimulants Stimulate immune activity	Helpful for people who have lowered resistance to infection, helps fight infection, may help fight cancer, contraindicated in autoimmune disorders	Astragalus, andrographis , arbinogalactan , beta-glucans , blue-green algae, echinacea , maitake, turkey tail
Kidney Tonics Strengthen weak kidney function	Helpful for weak kidneys, help to alkalize the body to prevent chronic disease, may also aid structural health of bones, muscles and other tissues	Asparagus, cordyceps, eucommia , goldenrod , horsetail, morinda root , nettle seed and leaf , pellitory of the wall, potassium, teasel
Vulneraries Help damaged tissues heal faster	Useful for healing injuries of all kinds (e.g. abrasions, broken bones, bruises, cuts, and sprains)	Aloe vera , arnica , calendula , comfrey , plantain , yarrow, vanilla, vitamin C , zinc <i>Essential oils: Helichrysum, frankincense, myrrh, tea tree</i>