

COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINES

Complementary medicines are also known as 'traditional', 'alternative', 'herbal' or 'natural' medicines. They are commonly used to relieve minor ailments and illnesses. While complementary medicines are generally safe, in some people they may not be suitable. Always ask your pharmacist before you buy any complementary medicines. Remember to say what condition you want to use the medicine for and any other medicines you are taking.

WHAT ARE COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINES?

Complementary medicines include: plant or herbal products; vitamins; mineral supplements; traditional Chinese medicines; naturopathic and/or homeopathic remedies; nutritional supplements; and some aromatherapy products.

ARE THEY EFFECTIVE?

Complementary medicines sold in Australia must meet standards for quality and safety. In many cases there is very little or poor evidence to support their reported uses.

In comparison, pharmacy and prescription medicines are generally well-studied. We know which conditions they are effective for and their safe dose range. Any special precautions, side effects and interactions with other medicines are closely monitored.

Makers of complementary medicines can only make claims about their products based on available evidence.

Your pharmacist or doctor will be able to advise if a complementary medicine is suitable for your health need.



USING COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINES SAFELY

As these products are often considered to be natural, many people don't treat them as medicines. But like any other medicine, complementary medicines need to be used with care.

Complementary medicines do have side effects. They can also interact with pharmacy medicines and those prescribed by your doctor. This may stop those medicines from working properly or may cause side effects.

Before buying a complementary medicine, talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you:

- are taking any pharmacy medicine or medicine prescribed by your doctor
- are taking any other herb/supplements
- have sensitivities or allergies to any medicine
- are pregnant or planning to become pregnant
- are breastfeeding
- are planning to have surgery.

IMPORTANT

- Don't stop taking your prescribed medicine and start taking a complementary medicine instead - check with your doctor first.
- Unless a product is specifically for children or includes doses for children, complementary medicines are not suitable for children.
- Like all medicines, complementary medicines must be stored out of children's reach.
- Some complementary medicines may not be safe in pregnancy and breastfeeding. Unless your pharmacist or doctor can confirm a complementary medicine will be safe during pregnancy and breastfeeding, it is best to avoid it.

The following table lists a range of complementary medicines and some examples of reported uses. Remember their use in these conditions may not have been proven to be effective.

Complementary medicine	Some examples of reported uses	Complementary medicine	Some examples of reported uses
Bilberry	Circulation problems, poor night vision	Kava	To improve sleep, tension headaches, anxiety, menopausal symptoms
Cascara	Constipation	Kelp	Weight loss aid
Celery	Arthritis, rheumatism, gout, urinary tract inflammation	Liquorice	Upset stomach, relieves inflammation
Chamomile	Sleeping problems, gastro-intestinal problems	Milk thistle	Liver tonic
Cranberry	Urinary tract infections, reduction of urinary odour in incontinence	Pau d'arco, lapacho or taheebo	Helps body fight mild infections
Devil's claw	Arthritis, gout, rheumatic disease	Peppermint	To relieve indigestion, wind, colic, diarrhoea, irritable bowel syndrome, inflammation of the gums
Echinacea	Wound healing, colds and flu, respiratory tract infections	Red clover	Provides hormone replacement for post-menopausal women
Evening primrose	Premenstrual syndrome (PMS), dermatitis, psoriasis, eczema, breast tenderness and pain	Saw palmetto	Bladder infections, sex hormone disorders, enlarged prostate
Feverfew	Migraine headaches, menstrual disorders, arthritis	Scullcap	Relieves anxiety and insomnia, anti-allergy agent
Garlic	To help manage high cholesterol, gastro-intestinal problems, skin and fungal infections, to reduce high blood sugar	Slippery elm	Skin moisturiser, cough suppressant, relieves indigestion and heartburn
Ginger	Nausea, motion sickness	Tea tree	Helps fight skin infections, antiseptic
Ginkgo biloba	Circulation problems, ringing in the ears	Valerian	To improve poor sleep, relieves anxiety
Ginseng	Invigorates and fortifies the body		
Goldenseal	Colds and flu, mild bacterial infections		
Grape seed	Circulation problems, inflammatory conditions, varicose veins		
Green tea	Prevention of tooth decay, helps reduce high cholesterol		
Guarana	Temporary relief of drowsiness, promote mental alertness, relieve headache and water retention, aid to weight loss		
Hawthorn	Rheumatism, liver problems		
Horse chestnut	To relieve diarrhoea, haemorrhoids, symptoms of prostate gland enlargement		

Ask your pharmacist for advice before using any complementary medicines.

Contacts:

Your doctor – listed under Medical Practitioners in the yellow pages of the phone book.

Your Self Care pharmacist. To find: (02) 6283 4777

In case of poisoning, phone the **Poisons Information Centre** on 131 126 from anywhere in Australia.

Pharmacists are medicines experts. Ask your pharmacist for advice when choosing a medicine.

Your **Self Care** pharmacist

KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN
DAVID S. NOLTE PHARMACY 701 - 703 RATHDOWNE ST., NTH CARLTON PH: 9349 1522 • 3049L

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