

- Seaweed-aloe mask if you've had a face lift: mix 1 tsp. kelp granules, 1 tsp. aloe vera gel, drops jojoba oil; or CRYSTAL STAR COOLING SEAWEED FACIAL MASK.
- Continue with Ester C and royal jelly to rebuild and nourish delicate post-op skin on the face.

HAVE YOU RECENTLY LOST WEIGHT?

Remember the price of weight loss can be wrinkles or saggy skin...Check out natural body firmers from AVALON ORGANICS, AVEENO, and ZIA (good results) to enjoy your new fit body even more!

HERBS, DRUGS AND SURGERY

Do herbs and the drugs used in surgery procedures interact? If they do, are you risking your health during or after surgery?

These are legitimate questions today, and you should be informed about the answers because the medical world is changing at light speed. More than 30% of people scheduled for surgery take herbal supplements on a regular basis, but most of them do not disclose what they take to their doctor or anesthesiologist.

Drugs, especially pain-killing and tissue rejection drugs used in surgery, are far more sophisticated than they were even a decade ago. Largely because of wartime demands in Afghanistan and Iraq, surgical techniques have made huge advances, transplanting, even replacing whole body parts successfully. Herbal supplements have changed too, mainly since the widespread introduction of standardized herbal products (see page 74), the laboratory concentration and potentizing of certain compounds within the plant in an attempt to provide a more natural alternative to drugs.

SO WHAT'S THE STORY TODAY ON HERBS?

Should you feel safe taking herbs before and after surgery to help you heal and recover faster? We are frequently warned by the American medical world that herbs may have dangerous interactions with drugs. Clearly, herbs are both foods and medicines; many have strong therapeutic properties on their own. Much of Europe and most of Asia commonly prescribe herbs to

help recovery.... even for advanced surgical procedures. Milk thistle seed extract, for example, is especially helpful to reduce drug toxicity in the liver caused by anesthetics and other prescription drugs. Because surgery is known to depress immune function, herbs like echinacea and maitake mushroom which boost natural killer cell activity can clearly aid recovery. Taken after surgery, gotu kola, a powerful healer, can even reduce scar formation and encourage healthy new skin and nerve development. (For instance, I have found it helpful for skin sensitivity after breast reduction or augmentation.)

After talking with many surgery patients, and my own experience, here's my opinion: clearly, people who take specific supplements and herbs before and after their surgeries tolerate the surgery better and recover faster with less scarring. (See preceding pages.) However, there may be a difference in the risk of interaction when using a whole herb formula and a standardized herb, or an herbal formula where the natural balance of the plants had been changed by chemical means, such as synthesis or purification. Whole herbs are usually much gentler (not weaker), because they have protective benefits built into the make-up of the plant.

WHICH HERBS AND SUPPLEMENTS ARE MOST CONTROVERSIAL IN THE SURGERY?

- **Ginkgo Biloba** may increase the risk of bleeding: Ginkgo's blood-thinning ability has raised concerns about abnormal bleeding during surgery, especially if a patient is also taking warfarin, a prescription drug blood thinner. I agree that care should be used before taking ginkgo if you are taking warfarin. However, ginkgo is a powerful antioxidant that neutralizes free radicals (generated in large amounts by surgery trauma) that can be helpful after your procedure. As a circulation enhancer, it helps accelerate healing and convalescence.
- **Garlic** may increase the risk of bleeding: A mild blood thinner, patients are now commonly warned not to take garlic just prior to surgery to avoid the risk of excess bleeding, especially if already taking blood thinners like warfarin, heparin or aspirin. Fish oil may produce similar problems taken pre-op. Clearly, care should be taken if you are taking blood thinning drugs. However, garlic is a very mild blood thinner, and as a powerful antioxidant and anti-infective, it can help prevent free radical cascades and infections after surgery. It's a good liver detoxifier that helps eliminate drugs from your system after surgery. Garlic contains germanium, a known wound healer; and increases

glutathione levels for better immune response.

- **Kava** may increase anesthesia's effects: Kava's muscle-relaxing, pain killing qualities seem to over-potentiate the effects of some tranquilizers used in surgery procedures, as well as cause interactions with certain long term antidepressants and anti-convulsants. Avoid this possibility by avoiding kava 2 to 3 days before your surgery. After your surgery, kava's pain killing qualities are beneficial against body stress, and may reduce your need for toxic drug analgesics.
- **Vitamin E** (synthetic): may increase the risk of bleeding: doctors warn against this blood thinning vitamin for up to a week before surgery, especially if the patient is taking warfarin, pentoxifylline, heparin or aspirin. The cases that showed increased hemorrhagic stroke caused by bleeding, used synthetic vitamin E in the study, instead of natural vitamin E from soy or wheat germ oil. Even in these studies, however, the risk of more common types of stroke was reduced. In my experience, especially when vitamin E is part of a natural multi-vitamin or other multi-supplement formula, or as natural vitamin E from soy or wheat germ, there has not been appreciable extra bleeding. Post-operatively, vitamin E can be protective against the side effects of some drugs and for faster skin healing.
- **St. John's Wort** may decrease the effectiveness of anesthesia and other drugs: I agree with the medical community that St. John's Wort, especially standardized products, and in concentrated formulas, has numerous unhealthy interactions with a fairly wide spectrum of current drugs. It should be avoided for 1 to 2 weeks before surgery; and the anesthesiologist should know that you are taking it.
- **Ephedra** can cause irregular heartbeat and spikes in blood pressure: I agree that you should avoid high dose ephedra formulas before surgery.
- **Licorice** in high doses can cause elevated blood pressure during surgery. Avoid it two weeks before surgery, especially if you are already prone to high blood pressure.
- **Feverfew** may inhibit blood coagulation, although there is evidence this effect has been vastly overstated. (Test-tube research shows this effect at concentrations much higher than what is normally taken. Regular doses of whole feverfew taken for migraine relief do not contain large amounts of anticoagulants.) Anesthesiologists warn that feverfew interferes with blood coagulation ability, especially when used with blood thinning drugs like warfarin, heparin and aspirin. People who use the herb post-operatively for drug-induced headaches report no adverse effects.
- **Panax Ginseng (American and Asian)** may elevate blood pressure and heart rate in some people: One of the best herbs for enhancing energy and stamina, ginseng has gotten a bad rap based on one report of interference with the anticoagulant warfarin. Another unconfirmed report, 24 years ago, in JAMA stating that ginseng at high doses raises blood pressure and increases heart rate, nervousness, sleeplessness and diarrhea, has been thoroughly discredited today, yet is still widely believed by skeptics.
- **Ginger** in high doses may increase the risk of bleeding: Recommended by European physicians for decades to curtail nausea after surgery, drug reports show that ginger, like feverfew may increase the risk of extra bleeding, especially if taken along with some of the blood thinning drugs like warfarin, heparin or aspirin. So far, effects seem to be based on theory or don't seem to be significant, especially in ginger-containing foods like ginger ale, or cookies like ginger snaps. Still, avoid eating a lot of crystallized ginger pieces or ginger chew candy before your surgery.
- **Gotu Kola** may increase the effects of anesthesia: Some reports show that gotu kola has an additive effect for some anesthetics. If you decide to stop taking it because of this before your surgery; consider taking it after surgery for its noticeable, sometimes dramatic ability to accelerate nerve and tissue repair.
- **Nightshade plants** (potatoes, tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, and tobacco): Compounds in nightshade plants inhibit two enzymes that help break down anesthetic drugs, interfering with the body's ability to clear anesthetics from the bloodstream. Patients who eat (or smoke) nightshade plants within 24 hours of surgery have up to 80% of these compounds still in their blood at surgery time, and often have a more difficult time waking up and moving in post-op. Surgeons now warn against smoking especially to avoid difficult post-op after facial surgery. Keep this in mind for at least three days before your surgery.
- **Valerian** may increase the effects of anesthesia: but helps after surgery to ease and relax stress, and promote restful sleep.
- **Echinacea** may increase allergies in some people, and may increase risk of poor wound healing: It helps mightily after surgery in accelerating nerve and tissue repair, and decreases infection.

Note: For more information on how to use your diet to help heal and recover faster, see Section 4 pg. 86.