

Vitamins, supplements and surgery: What you need to know

If you're preparing for surgery, you might be surprised to learn that vitamins, herbal supplements and even natural teas can affect how your body responds to anesthesia and increase your risk of complications. Just because something is natural doesn't always mean it's safe before surgery.

Unlike prescriptions or over-the-counter medications, supplements aren't monitored by the FDA. That means their effects — especially when combined with anesthesia or other medications — aren't always predictable.

Even if you've taken them for years without a problem, some supplements can:

- Prolong the effects of anesthesia
- Increase your risk of bleeding
- Raise your blood pressure
- Interfere with medications
- Raise the risk of heart problems

When to stop taking supplements

Stop taking vitamins and supplements two weeks before surgery unless your surgeon gives you other instructions.

Below are some common supplements that are known to thin your blood or affect how your body processes anesthesia:

- Agrimony
- Aloe
- Arnica montana
- Baikal skullcap root
- Bak Foong pills
- Bromelain
- Cayenne pepper
- Chamomile
- Chinese Peony
- Chondroitin
- Cinnamon
- Curcumin
- Danshen
- Devil's claw
- Echinacea

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- Ephedra (Ma-Huang)
- Feverfew
- Fish oil (Omega-3)
- Fritillary bulbs
- Garlic
- Geum japonicum
- Ginger
- Ginkgo Biloba
- Ginseng
- Glucosamine
- Grape seed extract
- Guilinggao (tortoise jelly)
- Japanese honeysuckle
- Kangen-karyu
- Kava root
- Licorice
- Melatonin
- Multivitamin
- Oil of wintergreen
- Poncitrin (Jishi)
- Primrose
- Red chili pepper (capsaicin)
- Saw palmetto
- Seasonal tonic tea
- St. John's Wort
- Ta Gastronol tea
- Turmeric
- Valerian root
- Vitamin E

Please note: There are thousands of different vitamins and supplements on the market. If yours are not listed, that doesn't mean they are safe to take prior to surgery. When in doubt, talk with your care team. We're here to help.

What's safe to continue?

Some vitamins and minerals are generally safe to take before surgery. These include:

- Iron
- Magnesium
- Potassium
- Vitamin B
- Vitamin C
- Vitamin D
- Zinc
- Folic acid

If you have questions about anything you're taking, please bring a list of all your supplements to your pre-op appointment or contact your care team directly. Your safety is always our top priority.

References

- American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, *Aesthetic Surgery Journal*, Volume 32, Issue 3
- American Society of Anesthesiologists – asahq.org/WhenSecondsCount