



CHURCH COMMUNICATION NETWORK  
PRESENTS

# Alternative Medicines: Popular Herbal and Dietary Supplements

Featuring

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Alternative Medicine: A Christian Handbook

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## **Introduction**

Herbal medicines, vitamins, and dietary supplements aren't regulated in the US

In 1994 Congress passed a law that anyone can put anything on the market

There's no guarantee that what is in the bottle is what the label says

## **Multivitamins**

Vitamins are necessary to our diet—but we only need a certain amount

There are serious side effects from taking too much

Multivitamins can be contaminated with lead

If you eat a healthy balanced diet, no need for multivitamins

## **Antioxidants**

A healthy diet with plant products will contain sufficient antioxidants

The form of vitamin C in an apple may have up to four times the antioxidant power of a 500 mg tablet

Antioxidants will not necessarily cure anything

## **Black Cohosh**

Alternative to estrogen for symptoms of menopause, including hot flashes

Plants vary, and it's difficult to get reliability from batch to batch

## **Creatine**

Creatine occurs naturally in muscle

For distance events or jogging, creatine has no real benefit

Side effects include cramping and weight gain

## **Echinacea**

For cold cure: Echinacea reduces the duration of a cold, but only by 10% to 30%

Echinacea is not very well standardized from manufacturer to manufacturer

For cold prevention: regular use of echinacea doesn't help

## **Garlic**

Garlic as a heart medicine: how it is prepared makes a difference

Reducing the odor reduces the effectiveness

The benefits are not huge: 7% to 12% in heart symptoms or in cholesterol

Some studies find that garlic in food is more effective

## **Ginkgo biloba**

Ginkgo is sold for memory and Alzheimer's disease/dementia

Ginkgo and other herbs can react with prescription medications and anesthetics

50% of the medicines on the market were developed from herbs

## **Ginseng**

“Siberian ginseng” isn't ginseng at all

Panax ginseng (Asian ginseng) has been studied the most

Benefits are small or are inconsistent

It might help reduce blood sugar in diabetics

## **Glucosamine sulphate, Chondroitin sulphate, SAM-E**

There's evidence that glucosamine and chondroitin have some impact on osteoarthritis

It takes up to 15 weeks for effectiveness

For rheumatoid arthritis, it's possible to reduce anti-inflammatory drugs

To avoid bad interactions, tell your doctor exactly what you're taking

## **Mangosteen and similar juices**

Extravagant claims for cancer, arthritis, etc.

There's no evidence—no studies show it's effective

## **Saw palmetto**

For benign prostatic hyperplasia (enlarged prostate): now a drug of choice

## **St John's wort**

Effective for mild depression, but it may not be effective for severe depression

It interacts with several other kinds of medications—talk to a professional

## **Shark cartilage**

A study funded by the NIH found that patients taking shark cartilage were doing worse

A substance purified from shark cartilage may help some cancers

## **Where can we find information?**

Don't seek medical information from a health food store

The Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database, [www.naturaldatabase.com](http://www.naturaldatabase.com)

\$90-\$100 annual subscription, but public libraries may have a membership

Information is up to date

Consumer and professional versions

## **How can we find good product?**

Quality testing lab: Consumer Lab, [www.consumerlab.com](http://www.consumerlab.com)

Consumerlab.com lists the products that pass its tests

Choose the least expensive one that's effective

## Resources

### **Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database**

[www.naturaldatabase.com](http://www.naturaldatabase.com)

### **ConsumerLab.com**

[www.consumerlab.com](http://www.consumerlab.com)

### *Alternative Medicine: A Christian Handbook, expanded edition*

by Dónal O'Mathúna, Ph.D., and Walt Larimore, M.D.

[www.drwalt.com](http://www.drwalt.com)

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