

Commonly Found First Aid Plants – Precautions!



Arnica

Arnica cream is typically applied directly to the skin to treat the affected muscle. While generally safe, arnica cream used for prolonged periods can cause skin irritations including eczema, peeling or blisters. In addition, allergic reactions to the arnica plant components are possible, which can cause contact dermatitis. Also reported cases of mouth ulcers caused by arnica-containing mouthwash.

Calendula

Some people are allergic to members of the Aster family and may also have a reaction to calendula. If you know you are allergic to chamomile, treat calendula with caution.

Chickweed

A very safe herb. Because it is high in saponins, extremely large amounts of it may cause nausea or diarrhoea in some people.

Comfrey

Special Considerations for Benefits of Comfrey

1. All species of comfrey contain pyrrolizidine alkaloids (PAs), which can potentially cause serious damage to the liver when taken internally. The mature leaves of *Symphytum officinale* contain the lowest amount of PAs. The young leaves and roots contain the most PAs.

2. As a result, comfrey should never be used internally during pregnancy, breastfeeding, or in small children with developing livers.
3. Some herbalists recommend using the mature leaves as a tea for short periods of time (<14 days) during healing of a broken bone or traumatic injury. While many people do this with no known adverse effects, there is a rare but real risk depending on circumstantial factors (i.e., levels of PAs in that particular plant, health of the person drinking the tea, etc).
4. Comfrey used topically is considered safe in regards to the PA toxicity concerns.
5. Comfrey should not be used on infected or dirty wounds (especially puncture wounds), because it may heal the skin without eliminating the infection.
6. Because of comfrey's amazing cell proliferation effects, there are concerns that using comfrey topically over a broken bone that hasn't been correctly set may heal the bone out of place.

Goldenrod

Some people may have an adverse (allergic) reaction to goldenrod. It's always best to consume small amounts when trying an herb for the first time.

Hawthorn People taking heart medications such as digitalis and beta blockers should consult with an experienced practitioner before taking hawthorn herb.

Large dosages of the leaf and flower may cause stomach upset in some individuals. If this happens, decrease the amount.

Hawthorn herb should not be used with people who have diastolic congestive heart failure.

Marshmallow

Marshmallow is considered safe for everyone to use although it is recommended to take it hours after taking prescription medications as it may inhibit their absorption.

Meadowsweet

Safe for most people. However, it should be used with caution for the following people:

Children under 16 who have the flu or chickenpox symptoms (because of the rare but serious Reye's syndrome)

People with asthma (may stimulate bronchial spasms)

People who are allergic to aspirin

Peppermint

Peppermint should not be used by young children under 3. Applied to the face, it can cause life-threatening breathing problems.

It is not recommended for people who have diabetes, as it may increase the risk of hypoglycemia, or low blood sugar, have a hiatus hernia, have gastroesophageal reflux disease. GERD

Mullein

The dense wooly hairs on the mullein leaves can be a bit irritating. When garbling lots of mullein leaves, you may want to wear gloves. When drinking an infusion of the leaves strain it through a coffee filter or several layers of cheesecloth to remove any hairs from the tea.

Mullein is a hyperaccumulator of heavy metals. Be certain that the mullein you are harvesting and using comes from healthy soils that aren't contaminated with metals.

Mullein oil should not be used in ear canals if the eardrum has been perforated.

Nettle

Some people experience headaches when they drink strong nettle tea. This could be due to its diuretic effect causing dehydration. This is often self-limiting as the body becomes accustomed to its effects. In other words, when drunk regularly, nettles has less of a diuretic effect (as is true for most diuretics, even coffee).

Oregon Grape Root

Oregon grape herb is not for the cold deficient type. There is some concern that it may interfere with some pharmaceutical drugs.

Pine – Safe

Plantain

Plantain herb is regarded as safe and there are no common allergies or adverse effects associated with its use.

St John's Wort

If St. John's Wort is famous for depression, it is probably equally infamous for its known effects on pharmaceutical drugs. As discussed above, it increases the metabolic pathways used by many drugs, thus reducing blood levels of the drugs and potentially rendering them ineffective.

According to the [Botanical Safety Handbook](#) here is a list of pharmaceutical drugs that are affected by St. John's Wort:

- Immunosuppressants
- Anticoagulants
- Antiarrhythmics
- Calcium channel blockers
- Anti-anginals
- Hormonal Contraceptives*
- Anxiolytics
- Antidepressants
- Antivirals
- Statins
- Anticancer drugs, such as chemotherapies
- Beta-adrenergic blockers
- Hypoglycemics
- Antiulcer agents
- Antifungals
- Anticonvulsants
- Skeletal muscle relaxants
- Antihistamines

St John's Wort has also been shown to greatly reduce the plasma concentrations of oral oxycodone.

Skullcap

Skullcap side effects are rare and it is considered a safe herb that can be used by most people.

Willow Bark

You should use willow bark with caution if you have gastrointestinal and liver problems or diabetes. Like aspirin, you should also be careful if you take anticoagulants, acetazolamide, anti-hypertensives and anti-inflammatory drugs because willow bark interacts with these drugs.

Common side-effects include:

- stomach upsets
- increased blood pressure
- allergic reactions.

Witch Hazel

Some people may experience skin irritation or allergic reactions after applying witch hazel topically.

Yarrow

Yarrow has not been shown to be safe during pregnancy.

Those who are sensitive to plants in the Asteraceae will want to use caution.

