

MEDICATION AND SUPPLEMENT ALERT LIST*

America is the land of medications and supplements! Isn't everyone taking something for this or that? Certainly there is a lot of good to come from this, BUT there is also a lot of danger, especially when you are contemplating surgery. Many prescription medications are notorious for causing side effects with anesthesia agents or having negative interactions with the common medications that might be prescribed after your surgery. The world of herbal medicines is even more confusing since the exact make-up of these products can be quite variable from one brand to another and even within a brand from one bottle to the next. We can't describe all of the known problems in this paper, but we can highlight some of the more common problems that have been encountered. There is a wealth of information on the Internet, too. The best recommendation is to ask questions if you have any concerns. This isn't a time to be embarrassed or secretive. It isn't our concern if you are taking medications to treat depression, sexual problems, aging issues, or weight problems. It is our concern if we don't know about these medications and you have a serious, life-threatening reaction to anesthesia or surgery. We all want your surgery to go as smoothly and safely as possible. And remember, it has also been said that Americans probably have the most expensive urine in the world!

ASPIRIN: Aspirin and aspirin-containing products are the most common causes of problems in surgery. Aspirin affects platelets in a negative way and can cause serious problems with bleeding during and after surgery. Some people are so sensitive that just 1 aspirin tablet can disrupt the normal clotting system for weeks. In most cases you must avoid ALL aspirin products for a minimum of 2 weeks before and after surgery. And, yes, baby aspirin IS aspirin. You can use TYLENOL as a safe pain or fever-reducing medication instead. In some particular cases, and for some limited surgeries, the risk of stopping aspirin outweighs the benefits of continuing it. You will have to discuss this with Dr. Lundquist. He often confers with your primary care doctor, too.

SMOKING: We list this as a drug since you are essentially addicted to the nicotine. Smoking is bad for surgical patients for MANY reasons. One, it compromises circulation in your skin and increases the risks for complications and poor wound healing. Second, it raises your risks of anesthesia and post-operative complications. And, third, we know it is detrimental to your health and the health of others around you. If you are looking for a reason to quit smoking this is certainly a great opportunity. In general you MUST stop smoking a month before surgery and refrain from restarting (Why would you?!) for a month after. Dr. Lundquist may not be able to perform certain procedures safely if you are a smoker. If nothing else, we can predict a higher risk of complications in smokers

than in non-smokers. Unfortunately, even 4-5 cigarettes a day is considered “heavy” smoking. We are also realistic. With all the stresses of surgery will someone really be able to stop smoking? You definitely will need the help of non-smoking programs, etc. Your primary care doctor may be the best one to get involved with. Good luck.

ANTIDEPRESSANTS: Some MAO inhibitors (MAOI) intensify the effects of anesthesia, and these reactions may be extremely dangerous if the anesthesiologist is not aware of them. Be sure to let us know if you are taking this kind of medication.

HERBAL MEDICATIONS: The list of herbal medications is long and confusing, with many names for similar products. As mentioned above, a major problem is that there is no control over the content or concentration of most of these products and effects can vary widely. We can list the most common problems that have been encountered. In general, you need to let Dr. Lundquist and the anesthesiologist know about ANY product that you have taken.

Vitamin E: Taken by mouth, can cause bleeding problems similar to aspirin. Stop at least 2-3 weeks before and after surgery.

Garlic, Ginger, Alfalfa, Cayenne, Papaya, Feverfew, Chamomile, DongQuai root, Willow Bark, Goldenseal, Guarana, Horse Chestnut, and Bilberry tablets or supplements all have anti-platelet activity and can inhibit clot formation which leads to bleeding problems.

Ginkgo, Ginkgo biloba, and Selenium are also powerful anticoagulants 3x stronger than Vitamin E.

Ginseng: May cause rapid heart rate, high blood pressure, and bleeding.

St. John’s Wort, Yohimbe (aka “the natural Viagra”) and Licorice root may intensify the effects of anesthesia similar to MAOI medications.

Melatonin: Decreases the amount of anesthesia needed for surgery which may make you too sensitive to some anesthesia drugs.

Kava Kava, Hawthorn, Lemon verbena, Muwort, Lavender, and Valerian/Valerian root are all used to promote relaxation and sleep, and may have tranquilizing effects that shouldn’t be combined with other sedative agents.

Echinacea: May have severe effects on the liver when combined with anesthesia agents.

Ma Huang (aka Ephedra) has been associated with over 800 severe adverse health reactions including death! It has an amphetamine-like effect with over stimulation of the central nervous system and the heart.

Gotu Kola: Also a stimulant.

Ackee fruit, Alfalfa, Aloe, Argimony, Barley, Bitter melon, Burdock root, Carrot oil, Chromium, Corlander, Dandelion root, Devil's club, Eucalyptus, Fenugreek seeds, Fo-Ti, large amounts of garlic, Ginseng, Grape seed, Guayusa, Gmena, Juniper, Nem seed oil, large amounts of onions, Periwinkle, Yellow root all alter the blood glucose level.

BENEFICIAL SUPPLEMENTS AND PLASTIC SURGERY

As discussed earlier, Americans are always interested in taking supplements for the slightest of indications. The following supplements have been mentioned as beneficial for healing and recovery after surgery. Dr. Lundquist does not particularly recommend any of these, but you can decide if you are interested. In small doses they are almost certainly safe. In large doses even these products can produce undesirable side effects. Be careful.

Arnica 30 (aka Mountain Daisy or Sinecch): Has the ability to reduce surgical shock and minimize swelling and bruising. It may reduce pain and speed the recovery process.

Vitamin C: An antioxidant, it can stimulate healing at the cellular level. It aids in producing collagen and strengthens blood vessels.

Zinc: This nutrient is an antioxidant and is beneficial in wound healing.

Bromelain (aka Pineapple enzyme): Can reduce bruising in fairly large doses.

Pycnogenol (aka grape seed extract): An antioxidant that can speed wound healing.

Nux Vomica (aka poison nut): Can relieve nausea and vomiting caused by drugs given intraoperatively.

Bottom line – be cautious when using all of these supplements, no matter what their intended benefits. In particular, let the anesthesiologist know about anything that you are taking on a regular basis. It might be best to bring in the bottle(s) so that they can be examined if you just aren't sure. Try to do this well in advance of your surgery if at all possible so that last minute cancellations don't have to be made.

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