Information for patients and families

Read this booklet to learn:

• facts about natural and herbal products
• what you should know before taking them
• where to find more information
What are natural and herbal products?

Natural and herbal products include products like:

- herbal and plant remedies
- homeopathic medicines
- vitamins and minerals
- other non-prescription health products

**Important facts:**

- Natural and herbal products can help you, but they can harm you as well. Many people don’t know the possible harmful side effects.
- Taking a natural or herbal product without knowing all the ingredients can be dangerous for everyone, especially pregnant or breastfeeding women and their babies.
- Natural and herbal products can interfere with:
  - other medicines
  - food
  - vitamins
  - and other herbal products
- If you are allergic to plants or pollen, you could have an allergic reaction from products that have related plants in the ingredients.
- Alcohol can also change the effects of natural and herbal products.
What do I need to know before I take a natural or herbal product?

Here are some questions you may want to answer:

☑ How can this product help me?

☑ Is there proof that it works?

☑ Do I know all of the ingredients?

☑ Are the ingredients safe for me?

☑ Do I know about any known harmful side-effects?

☑ Are the ingredients safe for my baby during my pregnancy or while I am breastfeeding?

☑ Will the ingredients interfere with anything else?
   
   For example:
   
   ▪ food
   ▪ prescription medicines
   ▪ medicines or vitamins I take without a prescription
   ▪ other natural and herbal products

☑ What is the correct dose (amount) I should be taking?

☑ What is the correct way to prepare and use the product?

☑ How long should I use it for?
Remember:

- Always talk to your doctor, pharmacist or dietitian before taking any natural or herbal products (including herbal teas).
- Always keep a list of all prescription and non-prescription medicines you are taking, including vitamins, herbal and natural products.

Where can I find reliable information?

The Natural and Non-prescription Health Products Directorate, Health Canada is responsible for ensuring that natural and herbal products are safe, effective and high quality.

HerbMed®
Website: [www.herbmed.org](http://www.herbmed.org)

National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health
Website: [https://nccih.nih.gov/health/herbsataglance.htm](https://nccih.nih.gov/health/herbsataglance.htm)

Motherisk (information about pregnancy and breastfeeding)
Phone: 416 813 6780
Website: [www.motherisk.org](http://www.motherisk.org)