

New Dangerous Supplements to Avoid

NAME (also known as)	PURPORTED USES	POSSIBLE DANGERS	COMMENTS
ACONITE (aconiti tuber, aconitum, radix aconiti)	Inflammation, joint pain, wounds, gout.	Toxicity, nausea, vomiting, low blood pressure, respiratory-system paralysis, heart-rhythm disorders, death.	Unsafe. Aconite is the most common cause of severe herbal poisoning in Hong Kong.
BITTER ORANGE (aurantii fructus, Citrus aurantium, zhi shi)	Weight loss, nasal congestion, allergies.	Fainting, heart-rhythm disorders, heart attack, stroke, death.	Possibly unsafe. Contains synephrine, which is similar to ephedrine, banned by the FDA in 2004. Risks might be higher when taken with herbs that contain caffeine.
CHAPARRAL (creosote bush, Larrea divaricata, larreastat)	Colds, weight loss, infections, inflammation, cancer, detoxification.	Liver damage, kidney problems.	Likely unsafe. The FDA advises people not to take chaparral.
COLLOIDAL SILVER (ionic silver, native silver, silver in suspending agent)	Fungal and other infections, Lyme disease, rosacea, psoriasis, food poisoning, chronic fatigue syndrome, HIV/AIDS.	Bluish skin, mucous membrane discoloration, neurological problems, kidney damage.	Likely unsafe. The FDA advised consumers about the risk of discoloration on Oct. 6, 2009.
COLTSFOOT (coughwort, farfarae folium leaf, foalswort)	Cough, sore throat, laryngitis, bronchitis, asthma.	Liver damage, cancer.	Likely unsafe.
COMFREY (blackwort, common comfrey, slippery root)	Cough, heavy menstrual periods, chest pain, cancer.	Liver damage, cancer.	Likely unsafe. The FDA advised manufacturers to remove comfrey products from the market in July 2001.
COUNTRY MALLOW (heartleaf, Sida cordifolia, silky white mallow)	Nasal congestion, allergies, asthma, weight loss, bronchitis.	Heart attack, heart arrhythmia, stroke, death.	Likely unsafe. Possible dangers linked with its ephedrine alkaloids banned by the FDA in 2004.
GERMANIUM (Ge, Ge-132, germanium-132)	Pain, infections, glaucoma, liver problems, arthritis, osteoporosis, heart disease, HIV/AIDS, cancer.	Kidney damage, death.	Likely unsafe. The FDA warned in 1993 that it was linked to serious adverse events.
GREATER CELANDINE (celandine, chelidonii herba, Chelidonium majus)	Upset stomach, irritable bowel syndrome, liver disorders, detoxification, cancer.	Liver damage.	Possibly unsafe.
KAVA (awa, Piper methysticum, kava-kava)	Anxiety (possibly effective).	Liver damage.	Possibly unsafe. The FDA issued a warning to consumers in March 2002. Banned in Germany, Canada, and Switzerland.
LOBELIA (asthma weed, Lobelia inflata, pukeweed, vomit wort)	Coughing, bronchitis, asthma, smoking cessation (possibly ineffective).	Toxicity; overdose can cause fast heartbeat, very low blood pressure, coma, possibly death.	Likely unsafe. The FDA warned in 1993 that it was linked to serious adverse events.
YOHIMBE (yohimbine, Corynanthe yohimbi, Corynanthe johimbi)	Aphrodisiac, chest pain, diabetic complications, depression; erectile dysfunction (possibly effective).	Usual doses can cause high blood pressure, rapid heart rate; high doses can cause severe low blood pressure, heart problems, death.	Possibly unsafe for use without medical supervision because it contains a prescription drug, yohimbine. The FDA warned in 1993 that reports of serious adverse events were under investigation.

Source: Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database, Professional Version, June 2010. For more information on this article, <http://www.consumerreports.org/health/natural-health/dietary-supplements/overview/index.htm>.

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