

# Daily Use of Herbs Can Be Dangerous

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Herbs have become so popular that any information of a critical nature about them is looked upon with great suspicion. You will see by what follows that it will be beneficial for you to view your use of herbs with caution.

Although herbs are used as food and as a beverage, the initial interest of most people is as a medicament to cure personal ailments. Some of our current most popular medicines were originally derived from herbs. Because herbs are naturally grown substances, almost everyone assumes they are universally good for us. Every day someone with a particular ailment can find an herb that will cure the problem.

Many of these products are consumed as tea. This makes it easy to increase the number of times a day it is used. It is common to start with a cup or glassful and before long the amount has often gone to two or three cups several times a day. If it helped cure the health problem, it is easy to assume the product is an excellent one, and then it becomes easier to think that, if a little is good, more will be better.

The problem with the use of herbs lies in the fact that very few have undergone a complete chemical analysis which will reveal all of the different chemicals which they contain. Most herb companies know only a few of the ingredients but they are particularly aware of the substance that is responsible for curing a particular medical problem.

The difficulty with this is that there are 396 herbs and spices marketed for use as tea. Dr. R.K. Siegel, of the Los Angeles School of Medicine, has found that 43 of these cause mental behavior alterations. Others cause kidney, urinary tract, stomach and intestinal problems.

The leaves of wax myrtle, rosemary, sweet gum tree and the root of marsh, contain tannin. Active diuretics and kidney irritants are found in dandelion root, dog grass, watermelon seeds, buchu, cranberries and juniper berries. Gotu kola contains caffeine. When safrole, an ingredient in sassafras tea, was found to cause cancer in rats, it was banned by the FDA in 1960. It is still fairly easy to obtain and is used as a flavoring agent in root beer. Sassafras is allowed but is supposed to be safrole-free. Safrole is also found in nutmeg, mace, anise and camphor. Tarragon contains estrogole which is also a weak carcinogen. This herb is used frequently in salad dressings. Camomile, fennel, eucalyptus, citral, rosemary, sabinol, mint, valerian are terpenes which are depressants and cause kidney irritation. Tansy and savin are also kidney disturbers and markedly irritate the urinary tract.

It must be obvious from these examples that too little has been done to investigate the safety of herbs and even less has been written. Producers and sellers of herbs are likewise ignorant of the effect their promotional enthusiasm may have in creating adverse problems to our gut and other body parts.

Dr. Paul Eck has found, in chemically analyzing herbs, that the concentration of minerals in them can be very high and their use can be antagonistic and may upset body chemistry programs for many individuals. He found that people with high aluminum levels that could not be traced to more common sources, was often due to the regular consumption of peppermint tea. His analysis disclosed this herb contains high levels of aluminum. The reason peppermint tea has a soothing effect on the stomach after a heavy meal is due to the aluminum concentration. Aluminum is well known for its use in buffer agents and antacid tablets and that is a reason these products should be avoided. Keep in mind that Alzheimer patients have high levels of aluminum.

When high mineral levels are present, they can upset a person's normal mineral levels when the product is used frequently.

The Food and Drug Administration published a report in 1977 on the "Status of Herbs for Food Use," (e.g. herbal teas) in which they listed 27 herbs that were reviewed by the Division of Toxicology and categorized as "unsafe." This is not an all-inclusive list.

During December of 1996, The World Health Organization advised a global standardization program be adopted world-wide to encourage the standardization of information about herbal medicines.

In a number of previous articles, I have rather strongly advised that we take a critical look at our passion for coloring, flavoring and sweetening of water in the making of drinks, as for the most part, these substances have been detrimental to our body chemistry. When our stomachs receive continuous large amounts of so many different kinds of liquids, these chemical concoctions can produce all sorts of imbalances.

If in consuming an herb as a medicine we are successful in curing the problem in a short period of time, the body can probably then detoxify the harmful ingredients if we stop using them when the ailment has been corrected. Too often its use continues and escalates.

When herbs are used as a food or beverage, it is well to realize the digestion of food starts in the mouth by the action of the enzyme ptyalin that is present in saliva.

The purpose of teeth is to provide the breaking up of foods into small particles, and secondly to soak the food with ptyalin, the first digestive enzyme the body uses. When we drink a food, we bypass the saliva and ptyalin and the whole digestive process that follows is jeopardized.

The detrimental problems that could come from the use of herbs would be small if they were only consumed occasionally. As has been pointed out, the difficulties magnify greatly when they are used as a beverage or tea, as the tendency is to drink increasing amounts, thus creating a harmful body habit.

When we think of how delicious a cool glass of fresh water is when we are thirsty, why do we become "hooked" on so many different and often harmful beverages? ❀