



# Stay Healthy

## Ask the Nurse

**Q:** Is dyspepsia a serious condition?

**A:** Some signs of dyspepsia are a burning pain in the upper middle part of your stomach, bloating, heartburn, nausea, vomiting, and burping. Sometimes dyspepsia is caused by a stomach ulcer or acid reflux disease and sometimes by certain medicines, such as anti-inflammatories. Consult your doctor to determine the cause of dyspepsia and to get the best treatment. If you have a stomach ulcer or acid reflux disease, you may need an acid-blocking medication. If you have an infection in your stomach you may need an antibiotic. To help avoid dyspepsia stop smoking, take acetaminophen for pain instead of ibuprofen or aspirin, and don't eat right before bedtime if you have acid reflux.

## Herbal Medications: Are they right for you?

Many of you may be considering taking herbal medication and supplements for their health benefits. You may have heard that Echinacea prevents colds, ginkgo biloba improves your memory, St. John's wort treats depression, ginseng sharpens your mind, and ephedra helps you lose weight. While the effects of these herbal remedies seem appealing, it is *extremely important* to check with your doctor about any adverse effects they may have, especially the interaction with other drugs you are taking. You can be at serious risk if you take any herbal medication or supplement without your doctor's approval. For example, ginkgo biloba and ginseng have been shown to interact with Coumadin or aspirin and cause spontaneous bleeding. And ephedra has been found to cause heart instability.

Consider these important points before you take any herbal products:

- Herbal remedies and supplements are considered food by the Food and Drug Administration and do not meet the same standards for safety and effectiveness as prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications.

- The active ingredients in many herbs and supplements are not known. There may be some differences as to what's listed on the label and what's actually inside the bottle. You may be taking less or more than what's stated.
- Herbal supplements are known to interact with other medications and this can cause medical problems.
- Herbal remedies and supplements can have negative side effects, the same as drugs.
- Sometimes herbal supplements are contaminated with metals, unlabeled prescription drugs, and other substances.

Just because the label says "natural" it does not mean the herbal product is safe. The herbs kava and comfrey have been linked to liver damage.

**If you have a home health care need, CALL: 1-888-VNS-1-CALL (1-888-867-1225) or VISIT OUR WEBSITE: [www.VNSNY.org](http://www.VNSNY.org)**

Note: This newsletter is for educational purposes only; it should not be substituted for advice by your doctor. If you have an immediate medical concern, you should consult your doctor.