

Chinese Herbal Medicine Safety

Purpose: to offer accurate information regarding the use of Chinese Herbal Medicine.

The mainstream media, the medical profession and a lack of consumer understanding have recently caused several concerns regarding so-called “patent” medicines (which come in pill form) manufactured in mainland China, including:

- **Safety/Quality** of Chinese herbs, and
- Drug-herb **interactions**.

Safety:

In our herbal treatment of 1000’s of patients since 1996, we have had *no* adverse reactions (other than the usual, temporary healing reactions that can occur with Acupuncture and/or Chinese Herbal Medicine). If we consider a patient could be negatively affected by herbs for any reason, we *do not* recommend the herbs, *ever*. Also, we practice a style of herbal medicine that utilizes *concise* combinations and dosages of herbs that offset potential negative herb-herb interactions.

We use predominantly ‘individualized formulas’ that come in powder form and are made for someone specifically as a unique individual; we rarely use ‘patents,’ which come in pill form and are made for anyone to take. The safety concerns published recently focus on the manufacturing processes of these so-called ‘patents.’ The few ‘patents’ we carry are completely safe, produced by companies that have passed FDA standards of manufacture.

The company we use for our individualized formulas, Evergreen Herbs, is based in the United States, using mostly high-quality Taiwanese-cultivated herbs, not mainland Chinese herbs.



Drug-herb interactions:

Combining herbs and drugs is quite safe; only a very few combinations, occasionally, have been shown to have true interactions. If you fill out your medication log and nutrition survey thoroughly (given on your first visits to the clinic), we will understand and avoid potential interactions between herbs and medications and/or supplements.

Theoretical interactions are determined by several factors, including

- the therapeutic index/margin/window, which is an indication of the difference between a helpful and a harmful dose. Some herbs and a few drugs have a low therapeutic index...we watch for those closely to avoid negative interactions, and
- the ADME scheme, which encompasses how a drug interacts with the body, including absorption, distribution, metabolism, and elimination.

The owner of the company we use, John Chen, has a unique position as a trained pharmacist *and* Chinese herbologist, and serves as our advisor in the area of drug-herb interactions. He has written extensively on these interactions and understands as much as possible about the topic.

If you are concerned about any interactions for yourself, we recommend that you start taking 1/3 of the recommended dosage, then slowly, over 2 weeks increasing to the recommended dosage.

Resources:

- go to www.scholar.google.com, enter an herb name and a drug name, and you will find out basic information on interactions.
- read the drug-herb interaction section in John Chen's book, Chinese Medical Herbology and Pharmacology (available to read in the clinic).
- Read the section on the controversy surrounding "patent" medicines in Chinese Herbal Patent Medicines by Jake Fratkin (available to read in the clinic).
- feel free to ask us any questions about your unique circumstances...*our sole purpose is to help you become as healthy as possible, naturally!*