

Herbs and Diet. The Secret for Good Health

The effective combination of herbal supplements and a cleansing diet

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What is an herb? It is a plant, shrub or tree part that is valued for its medicinal, savory, or aromatic qualities. An herbalist is defined as one who practices healing by the use of herbs. Some 70,000 plant species have been explored on our planet, over thousands of years, in every culture of the world, from tiny lichens to towering trees.

Herbal medicine is growing rapidly. Yet this hard earned knowledge from the past, now enjoying a massive resurgence, is ancient. The oldest written books on herbal medicine are attributed back 4 to 5,000 years into ancient Egypt, India and China. All cultures have explored plant medicine by trial and error, looking to alleviate suffering and illness of loved ones. Herbal medicine is currently growing rapidly in popularity around the World, as many become disillusioned by damaging side effects associated with pharmaceuticals. Currently 80% of the world's population uses herbal medicine to stay well, and it is not just Third World countries using traditional medicine. In Germany and France it is estimated that 30% to 40% of all medical doctors utilize herbs in their primary healthcare. In Australia herbalists serve as primary healthcare providers. Within rural China, a staggering 60% of the population relies on herbs for primary healthcare. Here too in Japan, 96.1% of doctors used some form of Kampo. (August, 1993 issue of [The Lancet](#)).

Herbal supplements are also rapidly growing, not directed by medical professionals; these supplements of herbs for health and wellness are learned about and taken by the general public. It's been only a few years after Japanese regulations permitted the sale of supplements for wellness, and it seems that the Japanese people are eager to know more, just as the Americans were 10 years ago. They are stimulated by mounting evidence that supplements can play an important role in the maintenance of health and the prevention of disease.

What are the Americans using supplements for? In America the general public is increasingly hungry for supplements and education about herbs and vitamins. According to the Harris survey of 2001, nearly six in ten American adults reported taking dietary supplements on a regular basis. And that that 60% of Americans have used just herbs in the past year! The most popular single herbs are ginkgo, ginseng, garlic, echinacea, St. John's wort and saw palmetto.

It should be noted that approximately 95% of these purchases, were NOT made in medical offices.

Let's look at the top reasons for using herbal remedies.

General health and prevention were the first four reasons, and the fourth most popular specific reason for taking supplements in the U.S. was weight management.

This trend to towards supplements is worldwide. Total sales of supplements worldwide rose from \$8.6 billion in 1994 to \$47 billion in 1999 according to a report in 2000, (37% were herbs). This survey, found an average increase of 13% in sales over the year 2000. Sales of herbal formulas, increasing grew more than sales of single herbs. The most popular and convenient way of taking these herbs, according to the survey was in capsule form.

Formulas are herbs in harmony.

European, Traditional Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine have histories of using blends of herbs together. Through practice and experience they have found that synergy between herbs happens and this synergy is a central part of their philosophy. The synergy is, the harmony created by the individual as part of an orchestra or a team. Science may not have the tools yet to confirm the super-subtle synergistic interactions and increased efficacy of ancient formulation practices. A recent case in point occurred at the London Royal Free Hospital England in the early 1990's. During trials to study a Chinese herbal formula for eczema, researchers were astonished when the addition of 'one extra herb' was added to a formula containing 10 herbs. It resulted in a dramatic improvement in previously unresponsive patients.

