

Is This Herb Safe?

The questions responsible herbalists ask before answering yes.

1. WHO?

Who is using this herb?



- Age (children, older adults)
- Pregnancy or breastfeeding
- Health conditions
- Allergies or sensitivities
- Individual constitution

The right herb for one person may not be right for another.

2. WHAT?

What herb are we talking about?

- Correct botanical identity
- Plant part used
- Quality & freshness
- Source & growing conditions
- Purity (no adulteration)



The right plant, from the right source, makes all the difference.

HERBALISM
IS BOTH AN ART
AND A SCIENCE—
ROOTED IN TRADITION,
GUIDED BY EVIDENCE,
AND HONORED BY
EXPERIENCE.

3. HOW?

How is it prepared?



Tea / Infusion



Tincture



Capsule / Powder

Extract (standardized)

Topical (salve, oil, etc.)

Preparation changes which constituents are present and how concentrated they are.

4. HOW MUCH?

What is the dose?



Amount per dose



Frequency



Duration of use

More isn't always better. Dose, frequency, and duration all matter.

5. WHAT ELSE?

What else is in the picture?



Prescription medications



Over-the-counter medicines



Supplements & vitamins



Other herbs



Alcohol, caffeine, diet, lifestyle

Herb-drug and herb-herb interactions can increase effects or reduce effectiveness.

Nature provides
the possibilities.
Wisdom determines
the appropriateness.

6. WHAT DO WE KNOW?

What does the evidence tell us?



Traditional use & herbal experience



Modern research & clinical studies



Constituents & pharmacology



Reported adverse effects
& safety concerns



What we don't know (yet)

The best decisions come from both knowledge and humility.

WHAT GRAS REALLY MEANS

GRAS (Generally Recognized as Safe) applies to substances in food under specific conditions of use.
It is not the same as FDA approval and it is not a guarantee of safety for everyone.

GRAS ≠
FDA APPROVED



GRAS substances do not require FDA premarket approval like food additives or drugs.

GRAS ≠
PROVEN EFFECTIVE



GRAS only addresses safety for its intended use in food, not whether it works for a health condition.

GRAS ≠
SAFE AT ANY DOSE



GRAS is based on conditions of use. Higher doses, concentrated extracts, or different routes may carry risks.

GRAS ≠
SAFE FOR EVERY PERSON



Individual factors (genetics, health, medications, allergies, age, pregnancy, etc.) can change the safety picture completely.

GRAS ≠
NO RISK



Even well-studied substances can cause adverse reactions in some people.

NATURAL DOESN'T MEAN HARMLESS.

Responsible herbalism means knowing not only when to use an herb—but when not to.

