

Special Report:

Is Your Herbal Supplement Safe?

Prevention sorts out the scary headlines, scams, and safe herbs.

BY SARA ALTSHUL

It's been a rough few years for herbs. A Canadian study published late last year found that of 44 herbal products tested, many were adulterated or mislabeled. The study authors said that two samples of echinacea contained a weed that could interact with certain medications; a sample of St. John's wort was actually an herbal laxative; and a bottle of ginkgo biloba was contaminated with black walnut, which theoretically could put people with nut allergies at risk. In December, the FDA yanked one herbal supplement from the shelves after it was linked to dozens of cases of liver failure. And a supplement manufacturer who was jailed for selling a weight loss supplement that turned out to contain a toxic chemical is facing new charges over sketchy products he was churning out, even as he was waiting to enter prison.

