

Does ECHINACEA interact with PREDNISON?

Although there are no documented case reports of an interaction between echinacea and prednisone, the possibility certainly exists and is mentioned in several references.^{1,2,3} Short term treatment with echinacea is reputed to boost cell-mediated immunity while long term therapy actually appears to suppress immune response⁴ thus, continuous use should be limited to no more than 6-8 weeks.⁵ In theory, echinacea in the short term could counteract the immunosuppressive effects of corticosteroids or potentiate their effects if used long term. Conversely, corticosteroids could negate the beneficial effect of echinacea.

Recommendation: Echinacea should not be administered in conjunction with corticosteroids in lieu of the potential for an adverse interaction.

¹ Olin B. The Lawrence Review of Natural Products. St. Louis, 1998.

² Miller LG. Herbal medicinals; selected clinical considerations focusing on known and potential drug-herb interactions. Arch Intern Med 1998; 158(20): 2200-11.

³ O' Hara M et al. A review of 12 commonly used medicinal herbs. Arch Fam Med 1998; 7: 523-36.

⁴ Coeugnet EG and Elek E. Immunomodulation with viscum album and echinacea purpura extracts. Onkologie 1987; 10 (suppl 3):27.

⁵ German Commission e monograpg for echinacea purpura herb. Germany: Special Experts Committee, Federal Health Agency. March 2, 1989.