



# DR ELSTEIN'S WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS

*from the world of health and nutrition*

## **How Herbs Interact With Drugs**

In the last newsletter one of the questions in the Q&A section was from a woman who is taking a drug called Arimidex to prevent recurrence of her breast cancer, as well as a medication called Inderal to manage her migraines. She wondered if she could take the herb St John's wort commonly used to manage mild depression, as her emotions had taken a downturn. My response was that she could go ahead and an astute reader questioned the wisdom of my advice to her, as she indicated that it was her impression that St John's wort should not be taken with medications.

Whether herbal remedies are compatible with medications is often questioned, so I thought it would be useful to attach a review looking at the studies, which examined the interactions between St John's wort and a number of medications. One of the actions of St John's wort is to switch on a chemical in the liver, which causes a more rapid metabolism and elimination of medications, suggesting that more of that type of medication would be needed, to effectively execute its actions. In other words taking St John's wort would reduce the potency of the drug and in the case of a medication that is administered to prevent a recurrence of cancer, this would be undesirable.

There don't appear to be any studies investigating the effects of St John's wort on Arimidex or Inderal for migraines but we can hypothesise that the efficacy of these drugs might indeed be compromised and that in the case of Arimidex a higher dosage might be needed.

There is a website which examines herb/drug interactions in detail, please feel free to visit it at [www.naturaldatabase.com](http://www.naturaldatabase.com) and if you are taking these at the same time you will find information on how these might interact on this site.