

Recipe for calming nerves:

Fragrant valerian
Hops
Lavender flowers
Balm
Chamomile
Anise

Mix in equal parts. Steep 1 tbsp. in 1/2 cup boiling water. Take 1 cup per day.

Note: Kava Kava has been withdrawn from shops because of a few isolated cases of toxicity in Europe, which were related to prolonged use of high doses.

It had been used for its tranquillising properties and its ability to increase sociability.

For centuries, its relaxing influence on the mind and body has been used at weddings and other special occasions. In fact, dignitaries such as the Queen and the Pope have drunk Kava-Kava during South Pacific welcoming ceremonies (Reader's Digest, 1999).

A leafy member of the pepper family, kava is known to reduce anxiety and tension, promote restful sleep and decrease muscle tension (can ease muscle spasms), without major side effects or loss of alertness.

It has also been found to have pain-relieving qualities that can be used to treat muscle aches

and chronic pain. Adverse effects include dermatitis, shortness of breath and visual disturbances (sensitivity to light and hallucinations).

Excessive use (over 400 mg) for as little as three months can cause temporary yellowing of the skin, hair and nails.

In rare cases, an allergic skin reaction called ichthyosiform kava dermopathy can occur (a dry scaly rash first appears on the face and then on the rest of the body).

Overdose can lead to intoxication, disorientation, loss of voluntary muscle control and somnolence.

Other effects of high doses include loss of appetite, difficulty breathing, blurred vision, bloodshot eyes and gait difficulties (Wong et al., 1998).

It should not be used with alcohol, sedative/hypnotics, barbiturates, antidepressants, tranquillizers (including buspirone [Buspar]) or other substances that act on the central nervous system.

There has been a reported case in which kava potentiated the effects of the benzodiazepine Alprazolam; it may cause excessive drowsiness with sedating antihistamine drugs, muscle relaxants such as carisoprodol (Soma) or cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril) and narcotic analgesics such as codeine and hydrocodone.

Cautions:

If you have heart disease you should avoid: ginseng.

If you have ulcers you should avoid: ginkgo, cola nut.

Note: this covers only the herbs mentioned in this article; if you have any medical condition you should consult your doctor and/or a qualified herbalist before embarking on use of ANY herb.

Herbs that interact with drugs:

Belladonna and antidepressants

Cola nut and antidepressants

Ginkgo and anticoagulants, aspirin, NSAIDs

Kava kava and alcohol, barbiturates

Sarsaparilla and hypnotics

St. John's Wort and alcohol/antidepressants/tranquillisers/HIV medication

Valerian and tranquilisers/antidepressants

Flaxseed may affect drug absorption/increase sensitivities to drugs

Herbs not to be taken over prolonged periods:

Black cohosh

Ginkgo

Ginseng

Kava kava

Valerian

How To Make Sedative Herbal Medicinal Tea

The general recipe for making medicinal teas is:

4 parts therapeutic herb

1 part aromatic herb

1 part demulcent herb

Use a total of one teaspoon of herbs to one cup of water. If you use more than one herb, they must add up to no more than one teaspoon.

Aromatic herbs are used to spice teas and give them flavour. E.g.

Allspice/Anise/Caraway/Cardamom/Cinnamon/Clove/Coriander/Ginger/Lemon or orange peel/Vanilla bean

Demulcent herbs have soothing qualities that prevent any internal irritation, such as stomach upset.

Examples: Arrowroot/Borage/Coltsfoot/Comfrey root/Liquorice root/Marshmallow leaves and root/Oatmeal/Slippery elm bark/Solomon's-seal root

Effective nerviness/ herbal tranquillisers

Chamomile/Feverfew/Hops/Mullein/PassionFlower/Peppermint/Skullcap/Valerian/Verbena

Dosage:

Drink one to three cups of tea each day in half-cup doses. To keep freshness, make only just one or two cups at a time.