Sage, Skullcap, and Castor Oil

“In this conversation on herbal medicine I want to briefly cover my use of three herbs, Sage, Skullcap, and Castor Oil. I have used these herbs in combination in the treatment of diabetic neuropathy, and in the example of the case history to follow, to save a patient’s leg scheduled for amputation.

Several years ago, an elderly man came to see me professionally. He had been a carpenter all his life and now 83 years old he was building homes through Habitat for Humanity. Specifically, he was working to rebuild homes destroyed by hurricane Katrina.

He came to see me on the recommendation of another patient and because he was scheduled to have his right leg amputated.

The amputation was deemed medically necessary because of damage to a major artery in his leg as the result of a previous vascular surgery. He and his doctors were concerned that he would not survive the surgery, but his main concern was

that he would no longer be able to serve people through his Christian mission of rebuilding their damaged homes. His surgery was scheduled in six weeks *(he was delaying it as long as possible)* and his request of me was to save his leg.

His leg was a mess. From just above the knee to his toes his leg was a tobacco brown color *(he was a caucasian male)*. In addition to the extreme discoloration his skin was hardened like plastic. The tissue in the leg appeared to be dead, it had no softness to it. He was also diabetic.

Sage leaves *(Salvia officinalis)* have shown efficacy in the treatment of diabetes, the regulation of blood sugar and in the control of nerve damage such as that seen in diabetic or alcoholic neuropathy. Sage also appears to have the ability to generate new blood vessel growth in tissue were that is needed and to starve off blood vessel formation in cancer tumors. It is a strange herb.

Skullcap *(Scutellaria lateriflora)* extract is formulated from the above ground parts of the skullcap plant. Historically and for medical purposes, the plant has been used as a nervine, sedative, anti-spasmodic, and as a therapy for anxiety disorders. Research suggests that Skullcap promotes blood flow to the brain and has a tonifying effect on the sympathetic nervous system. I recommend the use of Skullcap for many nerve pathologies and in conjunction with Sage for diabetic and alcoholic conditions, as well as, for fibromyalgia. These two herbs work well in combination with each other.

I recommended to my patient that he use these two herbs. The Sage as an herbal tea two or three times per day and the Skullcap in capsules at four grams per day with water. I also recommended the daily application of a castor oil pack directly on the affected leg. I trained my patient in how to apply the castor oil pack to himself at home. I saw the patient once a week for manual therapy on his leg and to monitor his progress.

Measurable changes in the color of his leg and its suppleness began to be evident after three weeks of this treatment plan and at five weeks he cancelled his surgery and kept his leg. Improvement in the color of his skin, the normalization of his skin and underlying connective tissue, as well as, blood circulation in the leg continued for several months.

Castor oil in the form of castor oil packs has long been a favorite topical treatment of mine with heat applications. Castor oil is also known as Palma Christi *(Hand of Christ)* and has been valued for its healing properties through centuries of use. Castor oil can be used in small amounts orally and is used this way for a number of conditions including Multiple Sclerosis and Parkinson’s Disease. In large amounts

it can be a harsh purgative *(a powerful laxative)*. Some medical doctors not knowing much about effective herbal medicine would prescribe Castor oil to induce labor Castor oil causes extreme intestinal cramping and can be very painful, adding to the pain of delivering a child. There are far better herbs for this purpose such as Red Raspberry leaf tea.

I have been very blessed in my training and practice over the last 50 years. I had the good fortune to meet and train with practitioners of natural and herbal medicine who either went to school or practiced in the late 1800's. But it has really been the health and healing guidance from the Baha'i writings that has given me direction and purpose."

Sage Link

Castor Oil Link

Skullcap Link

This Article Was
Written by Dr. Gregory Lawton,
My Teacher at the BHA

Contraindications and Warnings Below

Sage Medication Interactions & Warning

Are there safety concerns?

Sage is LIKELY SAFE in amounts typically used in foods.
It is POSSIBLY SAFE when taken by mouth or applied to the skin in medicinal amounts short-term *(up to 4 months)*.

However, sage is POSSIBLY UNSAFE when taken by mouth in high doses or for a long time.
Some species of sage, such as common sage *(Salvia officinalis)*, contain a chemical called thujone. Thujone can be poisonous if you get enough. This chemical can cause seizures and damage to the liver and nervous systems. The amount of thujone varies with the species of plant, the time of harvest, growing conditions, and other factors.

Special Precautions & Warnings:
Pregnancy and breast-feeding:
Taking sage during pregnancy is LIKELY UNSAFE because of the possibility of consuming thujone, a chemical found in some sage.
Thujone can bring on a woman's menstrual period, and this could cause a miscarriage.
Avoid sage if you are breast-feeding.
There is some evidence that thujone might reduce the mother's milk supply.

Diabetes:
Sage might lower blood sugar levels in people with diabetes.
Watch for signs of low blood sugar *(hypoglycemia)* and monitor your blood sugar carefully if you have diabetes and use sage.
The dose of your diabetes medications may need to be adjusted by your healthcare provider.

Hormone-sensitive condition such as breast cancer, uterine cancer, ovarian cancer, endometriosis, or uterine fibroids:
Spanish sage *(Salvia lavandulaefolia)*
might have the same effects as the female hormone estrogen. If you have any condition
that might be made worse by exposure to estrogen, don't use Spanish sage.

High blood pressure, low blood pressure:
Spanish sage *(Salvia lavandulaefolia)*
might increase blood pressure in people with high blood pressure,
Common sage *(Salvia officinalis)*
might lower blood pressure in people with blood pressure that is already low.

Be sure to monitor your blood pressure.

Seizure disorders:
One species of sage *(Salvia officinalis)*
contains significant amounts of thujone, a chemical that can trigger seizures.
If you have a seizure disorder, don't take sage in amounts higher than those typically found in food.

Surgery:
Common sage might affect blood sugar levels.
There is a concern that it might interfere with blood sugar control during and after surgery.
Stop using common sage as a medicine at least 2 weeks before a scheduled surgery.

Are there any interactions with medications?

Drying medications *(Anticholinergic drugs)*
Interaction Rating: Moderate Be cautious with this combination.
Talk with your health provider.
Common sage *(Salvia officinalis)*
and ***Spanish sage*** *(Salvia lavandulaefolia)*
might increase levels of certain chemicals in the body that work in the brain, heart, and elsewhere. Some drying medications called "anticholinergic drugs"
can also have these same chemicals, but in a different way.
These drying medications might decrease the effects of these sage species,
and these sage species might decrease the effects of drying medications.

Some of these drying medications include
atropine, scopolamine, some medications used for allergies *(antihistamines),*
and some medications used for depression *(antidepressants).*

Estrogens
Interaction Rating: Moderate Be cautious with this combination.
Talk with your health provider.
Geraniol, a chemical in ***Spanish sage*** *(Salvia lavandulaefolia),*
might have some of the same effects as estrogen.

However, geraniol found in Spanish sage isn't as strong as estrogen pills. Taking Spanish sage along with estrogen pills might decrease the effects of estrogen pills.

Some estrogen pills include
conjugated equine estrogens (Premarin), ethinyl estradiol, estradiol, and others.

Medications changed by the liver
(Cytochrome P450 2C19 (CYP2C19) substrates)
Interaction Rating: Moderate Be cautious with this combination.
Talk with your health provider.
Some medications are changed and broken down by the liver.
Sage might decrease how quickly the liver breaks down some medications. Taking sage along with some medications that are broken down by the liver might increase the effects and side effects of some medications. Before taking sage as a medicine, talk to your healthcare provider if you take any medications that are changed by the liver.

Some medications that are changed by the liver include
omeprazole *(Prilosec)*, lansoprazole *(Prevacid)*, and pantoprazole *(Protonix)*; diazepam *(Valium)*; carisoprodol *(Soma)*; nelfinavir *(Viracept)*; and others.

Medications changed by the liver
(Cytochrome P450 2C9 (CYP2C9) substrates)
Interaction Rating: Moderate Be cautious with this combination.
Talk with your health provider.
Some medications are changed and broken down by the liver. Sage might decrease how quickly the liver breaks down some medications. Taking sage along with some medications that are broken down by the liver can increase the effects and side effects of some medications. Before taking sage as a medicine, talk to your healthcare provider if you take any medications that are changed by the liver.

Some medications that are changed by the liver include
diclofenac *(Cataflam, Voltaren)*, ibuprofen *(Motrin)*, meloxicam *(Mobic)*, and piroxicam *(Feldene);* celecoxib *(Celebrex);* amitriptyline *(Elavil)*; warfarin *(Coumadin)*;
glipizide *(Glucotrol)*; losartan *(Cozaar)*; and others.

Medications changed by the liver

(Cytochrome P450 2D6 (CYP2D6) substrates)

Interaction Rating: Moderate Be cautious with this combination.

Talk with your health provider.

Some medications are changed and broken down by the liver. Sage might decrease how quickly the body breaks down some medications. Taking sage along with some medications that are changed by the liver can increase the effects and side effects of your medication. Before taking sage as a medicine, talk to your healthcare provider if you take any medications that are changed by the liver.

Some medications that are changed by the body include

amitriptyline *(Elavil)*, codeine, desipramine *(Norpramin)*, flecainide *(Tambocor)*, fluoxetine *(Prozac)*, ondansetron *(Zofran)*, tramadol *(Ultram)*, and others.

Medications changed by the liver

(Cytochrome P450 2E1 (CYP2E1) substrates)

Interaction Rating: Moderate Be cautious with this combination.

Talk with your health provider.

Some medications are changed and broken down by the liver. Common sage might increase how quickly the liver breaks down some medications. Taking common sage along with some medications that are changed by the liver might decrease the effects and side effects of your medication. Before taking common sage as a medicine, talk to your healthcare provider

if you take any medications that are changed by the liver.

Some medications that are changed by the liver include

acetaminophen, chlorzoxazone *(Parafon Forte)*, ethanol, theophylline, and drugs used for anesthesia during surgery such as enflurane *(Ethrane)*, halothane *(Fluothane)*, isoflurane *(Forane)*, and methoxyflurane *(Penthrane)*.

Medications changed by the liver

(Cytochrome P450 3A4 (CYP3A4) substrates)

Interaction Rating: Moderate Be cautious with this combination.

Talk with your health provider.
Some medications are changed and broken down by the liver. Sage might decrease how quickly the liver breaks down some medications. Taking sage along with some medications that are broken down by the liver might increase the effects and side effects of these medications.
Before taking sage as a medicine, talk to your healthcare provider if you are taking any medications that are changed by the liver.

Medications that might be affected include
certain heart medications called calcium channel *blockers (diltiazem, nicardipine, verapamil)*, cancer drugs *(etoposide, paclitaxel, vinblastine, vincristine, vindesine)*, fungus-fighting drugs *(ketoconazole, itraconazole)*, glucocorticoids, alfentanil *(Alfenta)*, cisapride *(Propulsid)*, fentanyl *(Sublimaze)*, lidocaine *(Xylocaine)*, losartan *(Cozaar)*, midazolam *(Versed)*, and others.

Medications for Alzheimer's disease
(Acetylcholinesterase (AChE) inhibitors)
Interaction Rating: Moderate Be cautious with this combination.
Talk with your health provider.
Common sage (*Salvia officinalis*) and ***Spanish sage*** (*Salvia lavandulaefolia*) might increase certain chemicals in the brain, heart, and elsewhere in the body. Some medications used for Alzheimer's disease also affect these chemicals. Taking these species of sage along with medications for Alzheimer's disease might increase effects and side effects of medications used for Alzheimer's disease.

Medications for diabetes (*Antidiabetes drugs*)
Interaction Rating: Moderate Be cautious with this combination.
Talk with your health provider.
Sage might decrease blood sugar. Diabetes medications are also used to lower blood sugar. Taking sage along with diabetes medications might cause your blood sugar to go too low. Monitor your blood sugar closely. The dose of your diabetes medication might need to be changed.

Some medications used for diabetes include
glimepiride *(Amaryl)*, glyburide *(DiaBeta, Glynase PresTab, Micronase)*, insulin, pioglitazone *(Actos)*, rosiglitazone *(Avandia)*, chlorpropamide *(Diabinese)*, glipizide *(Glucotrol)*, tolbutamide *(Orinase)*, and others.

Medications for high blood pressure *(Antihypertensive drugs)*
Interaction Rating: Moderate Be cautious with this combination.
Talk with your health provider.
Common sage (*Salvia officinalis*) seems to lower blood pressure.
Taking common sage along with medications for high blood pressure might cause your blood pressure to go too low.

Spanish sage (*Salvia lavandulaefolia*)
might increase blood pressure.
Taking Spanish sage along with medications for high blood pressure might reduce the effects of these medications.

Some medications for high blood pressure include
captopril *(Capoten)*, enalapril *(Vasotec)*, losartan *(Cozaar)*, valsartan *(Diovan)*, diltiazem (Cardizem), Amlodipine (Norvasc), hydrochlorothiazide *(HydroDIURIL)*, furosemide *(Lasix)*, and many others.

Medications moved by pumps in cells
(*P-glycoprotein substrates*)
Interaction Rating: Moderate Be cautious with this combination.
Talk with your health provider.
Some medications are moved by pumps into cells.
Common sage (*Salvia officinalis*) might make these pumps less active and increase how much of some medications get absorbed by the body.
This might increase the side effects of some medications.

Some medications that are moved by these pumps include
etoposide, paclitaxel, vinblastine, vincristine, vindesine, ketoconazole, itraconazole,
amprenavir, indinavir, nelfinavir, saquinavir, cimetidine, ranitidine, diltiazem, verapamil, corticosteroids, erythromycin, cisapride (Propulsid), fexofenadine *(Allegra)*, cyclosporine, loperamide (Imodium), quinidine, and others.

Medications used to prevent seizures (*Anticonvulsants*)
Interaction Rating: Moderate Be cautious with this combination.

Talk with your health provider.
Medications used to prevent seizures affect chemicals in the brain.
Sage may also affect chemicals in the brain.
By affecting chemicals in the brain, sage may decrease the effectiveness of medications used to prevent seizures.

Some medications used to prevent seizures include
phenobarbital, primidone *(Mysoline)*, valproic acid *(Depakene)*, gabapentin *(Neurontin)*, carbamazepine *(Tegretol)*, phenytoin *(Dilantin)*, and others.

Sedative medications (*Benzodiazepines*)
Interaction Rating: Moderate Be cautious with this combination.
Talk with your health provider.
Common sage (*Salvia officinalis*)
might cause sleepiness and drowsiness.
Medications that cause sleepiness and drowsiness are called sedatives.
Taking common sage along with sedative medications might cause too much sleepiness.

Some of these sedative medications include
clonazepam *(Klonopin)*, diazepam *(Valium)*, lorazepam *(Ativan)*, and others.
Sedative medications
(CNS depressants)
Interaction Rating: Moderate Be cautious with this combination.
Talk with your health provider.
Sage might cause sleepiness and drowsiness.
Medications that cause sleepiness are called sedatives.
Taking sage along with sedative medications might cause too much sleepiness.

Some sedative medications include
clonazepam *(Klonopin)*, lorazepam *(Ativan)*, phenobarbital *(Donnatal)*, zolpidem *(Ambien)*, and others.

Various medications used for glaucoma, Alzheimer's disease, and other conditions
(*Cholinergic drugs*)
Interaction Rating: Moderate Be cautious with this combination.

Talk with your health provider.
Common sage (*Salvia officinalis*) and ***Spanish sage*** (*Salvia lavandulaefolia*) might increase certain chemicals in the brain, heart, and elsewhere in the body. Some medications used for glaucoma, Alzheimer's disease, and other conditions also affect these chemicals. Taking these species of sage with these medications might increase the chance of side effects.

Some of these medications used for glaucoma, Alzheimer's disease, and other conditions include pilocarpine *(Pilocar and others)*, donepezil *(Aricept)*, tacrine *(Cognex)*, and others.

Skullcap Medication Interactions & Warning

Are there safety concerns?
There is not enough information available to know if skullcap is safe to take for medical conditions.

Special Precautions & Warnings:
Pregnancy and breast-feeding:
There is not enough reliable information about the safety of taking skullcap if you are pregnant or breast feeding. Stay on the safe side and avoid use.

Surgery:
Skullcap may slow down the central nervous system. Healthcare providers worry that anesthesia and other medications during and after surgery might increase this effect. Stop taking skullcap at least 2 weeks before a scheduled surgery.

Are there any interactions with medications?

Sedative medications

(*CNS depressants*)

Interaction Rating: Moderate Be cautious with this combination.

Talk with your health provider.

Skullcap might cause sleepiness and drowsiness.

Medications that cause sleepiness are called sedatives.

Taking skullcap along with sedative medications might cause too much sleepiness.

Some sedative medications include

benzodiazepines, pentobarbital *(Nembutal)*, phenobarbital *(Luminal)*, secobarbital *(Seconal)*, thiopental *(Pentothal)*, fentanyl *(Duragesic, Sublimaze)*, morphine, propofol *(Diprivan)*, and others.