

[IMAGE]

## **Ensuring Herbal Quality**

By Jaclyn Chasse, ND

Herbal medicine is a tradition and science that pre-dates modern medicine by thousands of years. It has been extensively studied both through traditional observation as well as modern research, and has experienced an increase in popularity recently due to its efficacy and low incidence of side effects. Herbs are a great part of a treatment plan, but it's very important to ensure good quality of the herbal medicines you choose.

### **Get The Right Plant**

Most herbs have several species. Echinacea is a great example, where there are 3 predominant species, all with different levels of medicinal activity. For the most potent Echinacea, it is recommended to use the root of *Echinacea angustifolia*. When shopping, you may notice that some products contain only flower, or contain a less-potent species. A product of the best quality will include the correct plant parts and the right species.

### **What's NOT In The Product**

Unlike 100 years ago, we have to be concerned about levels of pesticides, solvents, and heavy metals in our herbs. It's essential to use a company that can assure their products are free of these harmful stowaways. Some companies do so by controlling the growing process for the herbs, such as companies who grow herbs on their own farm. Other companies thoroughly test their products to be free of these contaminants.

### **Sustainable Medicine**

While not necessarily a quality issue that would directly harm your health, it's a good idea to consider using products that are more ecologically sustainable. This can be done by choosing companies who grow their own herbs or who harvest wild herbs in a sustainable way. Additionally, you can choose to avoid herbs that are at risk for becoming endangered, such as Goldenseal. More information about herbs and sustainability can be found at United Plant Savers at [www.unitedplantsavers.org](http://www.unitedplantsavers.org).

Herbs make great medicine, and all of us have herbal medicine in our ancestry. To get the most out of your herbs, look for companies who can supply good quality products, and if in doubt, seek the assistance of a Registered Herbalist, Naturopathic Doctor, or other qualified healthcare practitioner.

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