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Herbs

Goldenseal

Hydrastic Canadensis

What are the folklore uses of goldenseal?

Traditionally, goldenseal was used to strengthen the immune system, as an anti-inflammatory, as an antibiotic, and to treat urinary tract infections. The herb also was used as a treatment for skin disease and as a wash for sore eyes.

What is goldenseal?

Goldenseal is made from the roots of a small forest plant. It is a native American drug used by the Cherokee. Its active compounds are isoquinoline alkaloids, which include hydrastine, berberine, and tetrahydroberberine.

What are the proposed uses of goldenseal?

The herb may have antibacterial and amoebicidal characteristics, and it may help in treating canker sores. It also has been known to relieve indigestion, stimulate secretion of saliva, and increase appetite. Goldenseal may have a minor effect on circulation, on the central nervous system, and may decrease uterine bleeding.

How effective is goldenseal?

Recent clinical studies addressing the safety and effectiveness of ingesting goldenseal have found no research-based medicinal uses. Berberine, an active compound, is what gives the herb its antibacterial and amoebicidal characteristics. There is no convincing evidence that goldenseal is effective when taken internally, and it is perhaps only mildly effective as a local treatment.

Studies have found the tea may be useful as a mouthwash to relieve canker sores and cracked or bleeding lips. The active compounds appear to have some mild antiseptic qualities.

Some herbal merchandisers suggest that

goldenseal tea prevents detection of morphine in urine tests after heroin use. There is no scientific evidence that this claim is true: Goldenseal does not prevent morphine detection, nor does it eliminate the drug from the body.

What are the side effects of goldenseal?

Little research is available, but goldenseal can cause nausea and vomiting if taken in large amounts. Consult your physician before taking it, and do not take it if you are pregnant.

What are the recommended forms and dosages of goldenseal?

Goldenseal can be found in capsule, volatile oil, or tea form. Tea made from two teaspoonsful of the herb in one cup of water can be used as a mouthwash. This mouthwash may alleviate pain and promote healing. Repeat therapeutic mouthwash three to four times daily. For a mouthwash that will treat a sore throat, pour a cup of hot water over a teaspoon of the dried herb. Cool the tea until lukewarm, then use as a gargle. Goldenseal may be impure because of added foreign or inferior substances.

Conclusion

Goldenseal is most likely effective when applied directly to the skin or oral tissues to aid



healing of infected cuts or as a gargle. Safety and effectiveness in providing medicinal benefits for various health problems remain unclear. Medicinal benefits, as well as recommended forms and dosages, are controversial.

Sources:

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