

 **KSTATE** Research and Extension
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Herbs

Feverfew

Tanacetum (chrysanthemum) parthenium

What are the folklore uses of feverfew?

The traditional uses of feverfew include treatment of headaches and arthritis.

What is feverfew?

Feverfew is a strong-smelling perennial. Its leaves appear to contain the active compound parthenolide.

What are the proposed medicinal uses of feverfew?

Feverfew is best known as a treatment for migraine headaches and the associated nausea and vomiting. It also has been used to treat arthritis symptoms and to help control menstrual cramps, but those uses have not been well researched.

How effective is feverfew?

Individuals unable to obtain relief from migraine headaches with traditional medicine have turned to feverfew for relief. The herb works by inhibiting contraction of blood vessels in the brain that produce the migraine. Feverfew does not appear to stop a migraine once it has started. It is most effective when taken regularly over a long period in the correct dosage. Even a relatively small amount (60 to 82 milligrams) of dried leaves can prevent attacks.

No well-documented studies suggest that feverfew has beneficial medicinal effects on menstrual cramps or arthritis inflammation.

What are the side effects of feverfew?

Eating fresh or dried feverfew leaves can irritate mouth tissue. If this happens, stop using the herb immediately. It also can affect blood

clotting. People who take blood-thinning medication or have blood-clotting problems should not take it. Feverfew is thought to be safe, but no long-term clinical studies have been completed. Individuals who are allergic

to chamomile, chrysanthemums or members of the daisy family should not take feverfew.

What forms and dosage amounts are recommended?

A Canadian study showed that no feverfew product used in North America at the time contained medically effective amounts of feverfew. Look for a brand that offers a guarantee of potency. It should have a minimum amount of 0.2 percent parthenolide. It has been suggested that 125 milligrams of feverfew, about one tablet or capsule, be taken daily. However, manufacturers often recommend two to six tablets or capsules containing 300 milligrams. Considering the widely variable amounts of active compounds in capsules studied, that amount may be necessary for effectiveness. Fresh leaves of the feverfew plant seem most effective.

Conclusion

There is evidence that feverfew helps prevent migraine headaches when taken regularly, but it is of no benefit once the migraine begins. The way in which feverfew works is unknown, but research continues. Potency of individual products is questionable.



Sources:

- Tyler, V. 1993. The Honest Herbal. The Haworth Press, Binghamton, N.Y. 3rd Edition. pp. 133-134.
Tyler, V. 1994. Herbs of Choice. The Haworth Press, Binghamton, N.Y. pp. 126-127.

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