

Burdock

Overview

Burdock has been used for centuries to treat a variety of ailments. Traditionally, it has been used as a "blood purifier" to clear the bloodstream of toxins, as a diuretic (helping rid the body of excess water by increasing urine output), and as a topical remedy for skin problems such as eczema, acne, and psoriasis. The medicinal uses of burdock in treating chronic diseases such as cancers, diabetes, and AIDS have also been reported. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, burdock is often used with other herbs for sore throat and colds. Extracts of burdock root are found in a variety of herbal preparations, as well as homeopathic remedies.

In Japan and some parts of Europe, burdock is eaten as vegetable. Burdock contains inulin, a natural dietary fiber, and is also used to improve digestion. Burdock as a root vegetable possess considerably stronger antioxidant activity than common vegetables and fruits. In fact, recent studies confirm that burdock has prebiotic properties that could improve health.

Despite the fact that burdock has been used for centuries to treat a variety of conditions, very few scientific studies have examined burdock's effects.

Plant Description

Burdock is native to Europe and Northern Asia and is now widespread throughout the United States, where it grows as a weed. In Japan and parts of Europe, it is cultivated as a vegetable. A member of the daisy family, burdock is a stout, common weed with burrs that stick to clothing or animal fur. The plant grows to a height of about 3 - 4 feet. It has purple flowers that bloom between the months of June and October. Burdock has wavy, heart shaped leaves that are green on the top and whitish on the bottom. The deep roots, which are used medicinally, are brownish green, or nearly black on the outside.

What's It Made Of?

Burdock consists primarily of carbohydrates, volatile oils, plant sterols, tannins, and fatty oils. Researchers aren't sure which active ingredients in burdock root are responsible for its healing properties, but the herb may have anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and antibacterial effects. Recent studies show that burdock contains phenolic acids, quercetin and luteolin -- all powerful antioxidants.

Available Forms

Burdock products consist of fresh or dried roots. Burdock supplements can be purchased as dried root powder, decoctions (liquid made by boiling down the herb in water), tinctures (a solution of the herb in alcohol, or water and alcohol), or fluid extracts.

How to Take It

Pediatric

There are no known scientific reports on the pediatric use of burdock, so you should only give burdock to children under the supervision of a doctor.

Adult

- Capsules: 1 - 2 g 3 times per day
- Dried root: steep 2 - 6 grams in 150 mL (2/3 of a cup) in boiling water for 10 - 15 minutes and then strain and drink 3 times a day; may soak a cloth in the liquid and, once

cooled, wrap the cloth around affected skin area or wound (known as a poultice). Do not use on open wounds.

- Tincture (1:5): 30 - 60 drops, once daily. Typically, burdock is combined in tincture form with other herbs. The tincture may also be applied to a cloth and wrapped around affected skin area or wound.
- Fluid extract (1:1): 30 - 60 drops, 2 times a day
- Tea: 2 - 6 grams steeped in 500 mL water (about 2 cups), 3 times per day

Topical preparations of burdock are also used for skin problems (such as eczema) and wounds.

Precautions

The use of herbs is a time-honored approach to strengthening the body and treating disease. Herbs, however, can trigger side effects and can interact with other herbs, supplements, or medications. For these reasons, you should take herbs with care, under the supervision of a health care provider.

- Pregnant or nursing women should avoid burdock as it may cause damage to the fetus.
- If you are sensitive to daisies, chrysanthemums, or ragweed, you may experience an allergic reaction to burdock, including dermatitis.
- People who are dehydrated should not take burdock because the herb's diuretic effects may make dehydration worse.
- It is best to avoid taking large amounts of burdock as a supplement because there are so few studies on the herb's safety. However, burdock eaten as a food is considered safe.

Because the roots of burdock closely resemble those of belladonna or deadly nightshade (*Atropa belladonna*), there is a risk that burdock preparations may be contaminated with these potentially dangerous herbs. Be sure to buy products from established companies. Do not gather burdock in the wild.

Possible Interactions

There are no known scientific reports of interactions between burdock and conventional medications. However, you should talk to your doctor before taking burdock if you take any of the following:

Diuretics (water pills) -- Burdock could make the effect of these drugs stronger, causing you to become dehydrated.

Medications for diabetes -- Burdock might lower blood sugar, resulting in hypoglycemia (low blood sugar).

Blood-thinning medications -- Burdock might slow blood clotting and, when taken with blood-thinning medications, may increase the risk of bruising and bleeding.

Source: [Burdock](#) | University of Maryland Medical

Center <http://umm.edu/health/medical/altmed/herb/burdock#ixzz2ujpWC7yk>

University of Maryland Medical Center

Follow us: [@UMMC on Twitter](#) | [MedCenter on Facebook](#)