

ASTRAGALUS

(Astragalus membranaceus)

Clinical Summary

Actions

- Immunomodulator
- Antioxidant
- Hepatoprotective
- Diuretic
- Cardioprotective
- Adaptogen
- Antibacterial
- Antiviral

Indications

- Immune system dysfunction (for treatment and prophylaxis of viral infections such as frequent colds and influenza, bronchitis, Herpes simplex and HIV, Lyme disease (but not late stage), adjunctive cancer treatment, allergic rhinitis
- General prevention of infection and autoimmune diseases such as Hashimoto's disease, increasing vitality, stamina and endurance (e.g. athletes), fatigue, anaemia, weak limbs
- Enhancing cardiac function, angina, hypertension, oedema
- Hepatitis
- Asthma
- Prolapsed organs
- Chronic diarrhoea
- Abnormal uterine bleeding
- Diabetes mellitus

Traditional Use

Astragalus has a long history of medicinal use in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and is one of the most popular herbal medicines worldwide. The Chinese name huangqi is the symbol of the Yellow Emperor (a cultural hero who wrote an ancient treatise on health and disease), referring to the yellow root and its status as one of the most popular and important qi (life force) tonifying herbs in TCM.

In TCM astragalus has been used for the treatment of general weakness, chronic illness and to increase overall vitality and as a tonic to build stamina. Ancient Chinese texts record the use of astragalus for tonifying the spleen, blood and Qi.

Energetics

Sweet, warming and moist.

Constituents

Saponins; polysaccharides; flavonoids; amino acids, trace elements.

Use in Pregnancy

Safety is unknown although no evidence of foetal damage has been reported in animal studies. There were no reported safety concerns in a trial of pregnant women with gestational diabetes.

Contraindications and Cautions

As per TCM, it is avoided when there are heat signs or yin deficiency signs. It is often said that astragalus is contraindicated in acute infection however if someone is sick, and also exhibits symptoms of weakness, it might be used to strengthen the person's reserves to boost them towards wellness. It is contraindicated for some in certain kinds of late-stage Lyme disease.

Drug Interactions

Avoid with those on immunosuppressive drugs and transplanted organs. Caution advised with lithium.

Administration and Dosage

Liquid extract 1:1 in 25% alcohol
20 to 40mL weekly