

DEVIL'S CLAW

(Harpagophytum procumbens)

Clinical Summary

Actions

- Anti-inflammatory
- Analgesic
- Antirheumatic
- Chondroprotective
- Antioxidant
- Bitter Tonic
- Antimicrobial

Indications

- Rheumatic and arthritic conditions including muscle pain such as degenerative rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis and tendonitis
- Mild digestive disorders such as bloating, flatulence, dyspepsia and loss of appetite
- Traditionally used in small amounts to relieve menstrual and labour pain

Traditional Use

Devil's claw is an important traditional medicine native to southern Africa where it is consumed as a general health tonic and for treating diverse ailments including arthritis, pain, dyspepsia, fever, blood diseases, urinary tract infections, menstrual and postpartum pain, sprains, sores, ulcers and boils. It has been used in Europe for the treatment of rheumatic conditions for over 50 years and is approved by German Commission E for the treatment of degenerative diseases of the musculoskeletal system.

Energetics

Cold, pungent.

Constituents

Iridoid glycosides (harpagoside, procumboside, harpagide, procumbide, 8-p-coumaroylharpagide); phenylpropanoids (acteoside and isoacteoside); acetyl phenolic glycosides (6-acetylacteoside, 2,6-diacetylacteoside); diterpenes (ferruginol); harpagoquinones; pagoside; cinnamic acid; caffeic acid; amino acids; flavonoids; phytosterols and carbohydrates (stachyose).

Use in Pregnancy

Not recommended.

Contraindications and Cautions

Use cautiously in patients with gastric and duodenal ulcers, gallstones or acute diarrhoea as devil's claw may cause gastric irritation.

Drug Interactions

Combination may be beneficial with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). Caution with warfarin and acid-reducing drugs (such as H₂ antagonists and proton pump inhibitors).

Administration and Dosage

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