

LEMON BALM

(Melissa officinalis)

Clinical Summary

Actions

- Relaxing Nervine
- Anxiolytic
- Antidepressant
- Sedative
- Nootropic
- Nervine Tonic
- Antimicrobial
- Antiviral
- Relaxing Diaphoretic
- Febrifuge
- Carminative
- Aromatic Digestant
- Anti-Inflammatory
- Spasmolytic
- Antispasmodic
- Antioxidant

Indications

- Anxiety, nervousness, stress, insomnia, depression, chronic fatigue syndrome, tension headaches
- Improves cognitive function, dementia, Alzheimer's disease
- Dyspepsia associated with anxiety or depressive states, diarrhoea, flatulence, bloating
- Menstrual cramping, muscle tension
- Colds and influenza, fever, viral infections (topically for cold sore and chicken pox treatment)
- Hyperthyroidism, Graves' disease
- Radiation protection
- Heart disease, diabetes
- First aid for insect bites

Traditional Use

In Greek mythology Melissa was a nymph who shared the wisdom and honey of the bees. Balm is a favourite plant of the bees. Not only does it produce lots of nectar, it's also said to keep bees from swarming.

Energetics

Some see the aromatic qualities of balm as being warming and in Ayurveda the sour taste is generally seen as warming. However, in Western herbalism, balm is often considered cooling and drying.

Constituents

Flavonoids (quercitrin, rhamnocitrin, luteolin), polyphenolic compounds (rosmarinic acid, caffeic acid and protocatechuic acid), monoterpenoid aldehyde, monoterpene glycosides, triterpenes (ursolic and oleanolic acids), sesquiterpenes, tannins and essential oils (citral).

Use in Pregnancy

Safety has not been scientifically established and is unknown. The tea beverage is considered safe in moderate amounts after the first trimester.

Contraindications and Cautions

Claims that lemon balm should be used cautiously in hypothyroidism are based on *in vitro* studies which cannot be extrapolated to human use. Human studies are needed to fully understand the implications of lemon balm in people with hypothyroidism. Monitor the use of lemon balm in these people.

Drug Interactions

Caution with alcohol, barbiturates and central nervous system depressants. Monitor with antidiabetic drugs and thyroid hormones.

Administration and Dosage

Liquid extract 1:1 in 45% alcohol
20 to 80mL weekly