

VERVAIN

(Verbena officinalis)

Clinical Summary

Actions

- Sedative
- Mild Antidepressant
- Spasmolytic
- Mild Diaphoretic
- Astringent
- Diuretic
- Possible Galactagogue

Indications

- Depression
- Early stages of fever, debility of convalescence after fevers, especially influenza
- Inflammation of gallbladder
- Jaundice
- Gastrointestinal irritation
- Promotion of lactation
- Topically for headache
- Rheumatism
- Haemorrhoids

Traditional Use

Historically, vervain has been associated with sorcerers, witches, the divine, magic and other supernatural forces. As a medicinal plant it has a long-standing use from as early as 8th Century BC. It has been used traditionally in northern Europe for rheumatic pain and wounds. During the Middle Ages, healing herbs were often called simples and herbalists were known as simplers. Vervain was prescribed so frequently for so many conditions that it became known as simpler's joy and achieved a reputation as a cure-all used as a panacea for colds, fevers, nervous complaints, skin infections and gout. It is a traditional Chinese medicine used to induce menstruation, relieve rheumatism and as an astringent and vermifuge.

Energetics

Bitter, pungent, cooling.

Constituents

Glycosides: Iridoid glycosides; hastatoside, verbenalin (verbanalloside), verbenin (aucubin). Phenylpropanoid glycosides; acteoside (verbascoside) and eukovoside. Volatile oils: monoterpene components include citral, geraniol, limonene and verbenone. Other constituents; apigenin; beta-sitosterol; ursolic acid; oleanolic acid; adenosine; alkaloid (unspecified); bitters; carbohydrates (stachyose, mucilage); beta-carotene; invertin (sucrose hydrolytic enzymes); saponins and tannic acid. Abundant in potassium together with phosphorus, calcium and magnesium.

Use in Pregnancy

Not recommended, but further studies are needed.

Contraindications and Cautions

None known.

Drug Interactions

When iron supplementation is required, or in cases of anaemia, vervain should not be taken simultaneously with meals or iron supplements. If it is, then a vitamin C-rich fruit juice can counteract its inhibiting effects.

Administration and Dosage

Liquid extract 1:1 in 30% alcohol
20 to 80mL weekly