

HOLY BASIL

(Ocimum tenuiflorum)

Clinical Summary

Actions

- Adaptogen
- Relaxing nervine
- Antidepressant
- Anxiolytic
- Neuroprotective
- Antioxidant
- Immune modulator
- Analgesic
- Chemopreventive
- Anticancer
- Anti-inflammatory
- Antimicrobial
- Expectorant
- Cardioprotective
- Hypolipidaemic
- Hepatoprotective

Indications

- Fatigue, stress, mood disorders, generalised anxiety disorder, poor memory, Alzheimer's disease
- Cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, stroke
- Viral, fungal, skin and respiratory tract infections, herpes simplex virus, acne, allergic rhinitis, asthma, tooth decay, gingivitis
- High blood sugar, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, insulin resistance
- Peptic ulcers, indigestion
- Pain, headache, arthritis
- Hepatic disease, fatty liver disease
- Cancer prevention, adjunct to radiotherapy, heavy metal toxicity
- Issues and physical demands faced by modern air travellers such as fatigue, infection, and anxiety

Traditional Use

Holy basil is regarded in the Hindu religion as the holiest of all plants and within Ayurveda it is known as the "queen of herbs".

Energetics

Warming, drying, pungent, sweet.

Constituents

Essential oils (eugenol, methyl eugenol), flavonoids (ursolic acid, oleanolic acid, ocimumoside A and B, rosmarinic acid, orientin, vicenin), saponins, triterpenoids, tannins, alkaloids, glycosides along with nutrients such as vitamins A and C, zinc, calcium, iron and chlorophyll.

Use in Pregnancy

High doses of holy basil are best avoided in pregnancy. It has been used traditionally throughout pregnancy however there is preclinical evidence to suggest that high doses may have antifertility and abortifacient effects. Further research in humans is necessary to confirm this as experimental evidence cannot be extrapolated to human use.

Contraindications and Cautions

Holy basil has been used for countless generations, in different cultures and systems of medicine, without any specific safety concerns. Patients should discontinue holy basil at least two weeks before elective surgical procedures due to potential antiplatelet and hypotensive effects, which might cause excessive bleeding and interfere with blood pressure control if used perioperatively.

Drug Interactions

While these interactions have not been reported, and they may not be clinically significant, monitor with anticoagulant/antiplatelet drugs due to theoretical additive effects, phenobarbital due to theoretical risk of increased sedation and hypoglycaemic medications due to holy basil's anti-diabetic action.

Administration and Dosage

Liquid extract 1:2 in 60% alcohol
20 to 50mL weekly