

Cat's Claw - Uña de Gato

Cat's Claw

Uña de Gato

Family Malpighiaceae, *Uncaria tomentosa* and *U. guianensis*

Properties & Actions

Analgesic, anti-inflammatory, antimutagenic, antioxidant, antiproliferative, antitumorous, antiviral, cytoprotective, cytostatic, cytotoxic, depurative, diuretic, hypotensive, immunostimulant, immunomodulatory.

Common Names: cat's claw, uña de gato, paraguay, garbato, garbato casha, samento, toroñi, tambor huasca, uña huasca, uña de gavilan, hawk's claw, saventaro

Botanical Synonyms: *Uncaria surinamensis*, *Nauclea aculeata*, *N. tomentosa*, *Ourouparia tomentosa*
Plant parts utilized: bark, root, leaves



Biochemistry

Principal active biochemicals are six oxindole alkaloids and a number of others: The oxindole alkaloids significantly enhance the ability of white blood cells to attack, engulf, and digest harmful microbes or foreign bodies.

***Uncaria tomentosa*, reputedly the most effective of several uña de gato species, is endemic to the Peruvian Amazon and is gaining international attention for its therapeutic qualities.** Two closely-related species of *Uncaria* are used almost interchangeably in the rainforests: *U. tomentosa* and *U. guianensis*. There are other species of plants with a common name of cat's claw (or uña de gato) in Mexico and Latin America; however, they derive from an entirely different plant--not belonging to the *Uncaria* genus, or even the Rubiaceae family. Several of the Mexican uña de gato varieties have toxic properties.



by the indigenous peoples of the Amazon rainforest in very t's claw (*U. tomentosa*) has been used medicinally by the ipibo tribes of Peru for at least 2,000 years. The Asháninka rded history of use of the plant. They are also the largest commercial source of cat's claw from Peru today.

Studies began in the early 1970s when Klaus Keplinger, a journalist and self-taught ethnologist from Innsbruck, Austria, organized the first definitive work on cat's claw. Keplinger's work in the 1970s and 1980s led to several extracts of cat's claw being sold in Austria and Germany as herbal drugs, as well as the filing

journalist and self-taught ethnologist from Innsbruck, Austria, organized the first definitive work on cat's claw. Keplinger's work in the 1970s and 1980s led to several extracts of cat's claw being sold in Austria and Germany as herbal drugs, as well as the filing of four U.S. patents describing extraction procedures for a group of chemicals called oxindole alkaloids, and the immunostimulating actions of these alkaloids, found in cat's claw.

Other independent researchers in Spain, France, Japan, Germany and Peru followed Keplinger--many of whom confirmed his research on the immunostimulating alkaloids in the vine and root. Many of these studies published from the late 1970s to early 1990s indicated that the whole oxindole alkaloid fraction, whole vine bark and/or root bark extracts, or six individually-tested oxindole alkaloids increased immune function by up to 50% in relatively small amounts.

The immune organ systems produce and house cells while the entire the immune system is composed of many interdependent cell types found throughout the body that collectively protect the body from bacterial, parasitic, fungal, viral infections and from the growth of tumor cells. Many of these cell types have specialized functions. The cells of the immune system can engulf bacteria, kill parasites or tumor cells, or kill viral-infected cells.

The Organs of the Immune System:

- Bone Marrow
- Thymus
- Spleen
- Lymph Nodes

The Cells of the Immune System:

- T-Cells --The T helper subset and the T killer/suppressor subset
- Natural Killer Cells
- B Cells
- Macrophages
- Dendritic Cells

In addition to its immunostimulating activity, other in vitro anticancerous properties have been documented for these alkaloids and other constituents in cat's claw. Five of the oxindole alkaloids have been clinically documented with in vitro antileukemic properties, and various root and bark extracts have demonstrated antitumorous and antimutagenic properties.

Another significant area of study has focused on cat's claw's anti-inflammatory properties. This study and subsequent ones indicated that cat's claw (and, especially, its glycosides) could inhibit inflammation from 46% and up to 89% in various in vivo and in vitro tests.

The anti-inflammatory effects of cat's claw have been beneficial in the treatment of arthritis, rheumatism, bursitis and gout. As an antioxidant, it also helps protect cells from damage caused by free radicals. Its beneficial effects in treating arthritis pain may also be due, in part, to its ability to cleanse the digestive tract and aid in removing toxins from the body. Arthritis, joint pain and inflammation as well as chronic fatigue, allergies, immune deficiency and a host of other conditions have been associated with defects in intestinal permeability and toxin overload.

A group of anti-inflammatory glycoside chemicals in cat's claw also demonstrated in vitro antiviral properties in another earlier study. In addition to the immunostimulant alkaloids, cat's claw contains the alkaloids rhynchophylline, hirsutine, and mitraphylline, which have demonstrated hypotensive and vasodilating properties. Rhynchophylline also has shown to inhibit platelet aggregation and thrombosis. It may also prevent blood clots in blood vessels and relax the blood vessels of endothelial cells, dilate peripheral blood vessels, lower the heart rate, and lower blood cholesterol.

Keplinger's observatory trials with cancer patients taking cat's claw in conjunction with such traditional cancer therapies as chemotherapy and radiation reported fewer side effects to the traditional therapies (such as hair loss, weight loss, nausea, secondary infections, and skin problems).

Research in Argentina reports that cat's claw is an effective antioxidant; other researchers in 2000 concluded that it is an antioxidant as well as a remarkably potent inhibitor of TNF α production (TNF, or tumor necrosis factor, represents a model for tumor growth driven by an inflammatory cytokine).

In herbal medicine today, cat's claw is employed around the world for many different conditions including immune disorders, gastritis, ulcers, cancer, arthritis, rheumatism, rheumatic disorders, neuralgias, chronic inflammation of all kinds, and such viral diseases as herpes zoster (shingles).

Contraindications

Cat's claw has immunostimulant effects and is contraindicated before or following any organ or bone marrow transplant or skin graft.

It may reduce platelet aggregation and thin the blood. Check with your doctor first if you are taking coumadin or other blood thinning drugs and discontinue use one week to ten days prior to any major surgical procedure.

Avoid taking bark capsules or tablets at the same time as antacids.



Be sure to try NSP's Uña De Gato (Cat's Claw) (100 caps) or Glucosamine (60 caps).

References

<http://www.biopark.org/peru/unadegato.html>
<http://www.thebody.com/content/whatis/art1788.html>

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Yours in Good Health!

Sincerely,

Chris Ritchason
Dr. Jack & Verlyn Ritchason, Founders
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