

Damiana

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Damiana (dah mee AH na)

Damiana is also known as *Turnera diffusa*, Mexican damiana, old woman's broom, and herba de la pastora. Other Names: Damiana aphrodisiaca, Damiana Herb, Damiana Leaf, Herba de la Pastora, *Turnera diffusa*, *Turnerae diffusae folium*, *Turnerae diffusae herba*, *Turnera microphyllia*.

In herbal medicine, damiana is used to treat conditions ranging from coughs to constipation to depression. The herbal supplement is reputed to help with Fibromyalgia, energy, emphysema, low estrogen, frigidity, hot flashes, impotency, infertility, menopause, Parkinson's disease, PMS, inflammation of prostate, Lou Gehrig's disease, and more dealing with reproductive organs in both males and females.



The ancient Mayan civilization utilized the damiana herb as a traditional aphrodisiac, and the people of Central America where the Mayan civilization was based utilize it to this day. As a traditional medicine, damiana evidently traveled from the Americas to Europe, where it was also taken up for a number of uses, including sex-enhancing purposes. However, in Europe at this time damiana is also used as a mild stimulant, to relieve depression, as a diuretic, and to treat constipation. As herbal tonic as well as an aphrodisiac, the damiana herb remains in continued use and is considered very valuable for its stimulatory action, as well as its tonic like effect on the body. Herbalist will often suggest this herb as a valuable remedy for people affected by a mild depression. The damiana herb is a very strong and aromatic herb, it has a slight bitter taste, and the leaves of the herb are used in countries such as Mexico to substitute for tea leaves and also, the herb is used as a flavoring agent for a variety of liqueurs.

Damiana leaves have been used as an aphrodisiac and to boost sexual potency by the native peoples of Mexico, including the Mayan Indians and is used for both male and female sexual stimulation, increased energy, asthma, depression, impotence and menstrual problems, anxiety, nervous exhaustion, debility, impotence, premature ejaculation, urinary infections, frigidity, vaginal discharge, menopausal problems, poor appetite, and atonic (poor muscle tone) constipation.

The libido-boosting power of damiana hasn't been tested in humans, although liquor made from the leaves has long been used as an aphrodisiac in Mexico. In animal studies, extracts of damiana speeded up the mating behavior of "sexually sluggish" or impotent male rats. It had no effect on sexually potent rats.

The action of the damiana herb lies mainly in its ability to act as a tonic and as a restorative agent on the functioning of the nervous system in affected patients. In addition, the herb has a traditional reputation as an aphrodisiac agent. The tonic property of the herbal remedy is connected to the main chemical constituent, called thymol; this compound has an antiseptic and tonic action on the body.

Women affected by very painful and delayed periods are usually prescribed herbal remedies made from the damiana, and the herb is also used specifically for the treatment of persistent headaches which are connected to menstruation in women.

One study suggests that damiana may have plant compounds with effects similar to those of progesterone. Over 150 herbs were tested for their ability to bind with estrogen and progesterone receptors in breast cancer cells and found that the damiana was among the six highest progesterone-binding herbs and spices.

The damiana possesses both a diuretic and urinary antiseptic action, it is very effective in the treatment of urinary infections, including cases of cystitis and urethritis affecting patients. The main effect of the herb comes about by the action of the chemical compound known as arbutin that is chemically converted into a form known as hydroquinone, which works as a strong urinary antiseptic, along the internal urinary tubules and results in the alleviation of the conditions. The chemical compound is also seen in a number of other useful herbs.

The mildly laxative action of the damiana is another important property it possesses as an herbal remedy; the herb is very effective in the treatment of persistent constipation, which is caused by a poor muscle tone in the bowel musculature.

Damiana contains cineole, which shows anti fatigue activity; alpha-pinene, which is anti-inflammatory, sedative and tranquilizing; arbutin, which is a diuretic and urinary antiseptic; and thymol, which has dozens of properties including muscle-relaxing, urinary antiseptic, antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. The British Herbal Compendium indicates use of damiana for depressive states and atonic (lack of muscle tone) constipation.

Damiana may help aid weight loss.

In a study reported in 2001, a mixed herbal preparation (YGD) containing Yerbe mate' Guarana and Damiana was studied for weight loss purposes. Forty-seven healthy overweight patients entered a double-blind placebo-controlled parallel trial of three capsules of YGD capsules before each main meal for 45 days compared with three placebo capsules. Body weight was monitored in 22 patients who remained on the herbal formula for 12 months. The herbal formula delayed gastric emptying, promoted a feeling of fullness and induced significant weight loss over 45 days.

Do not take damiana without first talking to your doctor if you

- take a medicine to treat diabetes or to control blood such as insulin, glipizide (Glucotrol), glyburide (Micronase, Glynase, Diabeta), tolbutamide (Orinase), metformin (Glucophage), acarbose (Precose), troglitazone (Rezulin), pioglitazone (Actos), rosiglitazone (Avandia), and others;
- have a history of breast cancer;
- have a psychiatric disorder such as mania or schizophrenia;
- have Alzheimer's disease; or
- have Parkinson's disease.

Although rare, allergic reactions to damiana may occur. Talk to your healthcare provider about any side effect that seems unusual or that is especially bothersome.

References

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Yours in Good Health!

Sincerely,

Chris Ritchason
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The Back to Herbs Team

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