

From our friends at "Back to Herbs"



Gentian Root

Gentian root has a long history of use as an herbal bitter in the treatment of digestive disorders and is an ingredient of many proprietary medicines. It contains some of the bitterest compounds known and is used as a scientific basis for measuring bitterness.

Most of the benefits of gentian root revolve around this herb's ability to stimulate and tone the entire digestive system. Its bitter elements set off a positive reaction, allowing for movement and the production of proper fluids. It is well known as a liver tonic and a remedy for common digestive issues such as flatulence, indigestion, and upset stomach. It can be taken to stimulate the system after an illness as well. Gentian also helps to improve appetite, making gentian root a beneficial herb for anorexia.

It is especially useful in states of exhaustion from chronic disease and in all cases of debility, weakness of the digestive system and lack of appetite. It is one of the best strengtheners of the human system, stimulating the liver (Gentian has been shown to be a true cholagogue, it raises bile secretion by about 20%), gall bladder and digestive system.



It embodies the best of the bitters' known characteristics:

- stomachic (benefits the stomach)
- cholagogue (promoting bile flow)
- choloretic (promoting bile secretion by the liver)
- sialagogue (any drug or agent that can stimulate the flow of saliva)
- secretagogue (a substance that stimulates secretion as by the stomach or pancreas) appetite stimulant, and digestive tonic.

Many species of gentiana are used in a similar way across widely divergent cultures. It is found in the Indian Ayurveda herbal medicine, Traditional Chinese Medicine, as well as in European herbal pharmacopeia. Gentian root is native to the alpine regions of South and Central Europe, and can be found growing in Asia Minor as well. Today it is cultivated in the United States.

Gentian is used as a blood builder, traditionally used during convalescence. It is used as a natural herbal treatment for exhaustion. Gentian is believed to strengthen the entire system by stimulating the digestive function as well as the general circulation and the

activity of many glands and organs.

Gentian is used to alleviate inflammations in the gall bladder. Gentiana scabra, or lung tan in traditional Chinese medicine, has much the same uses as gentian in European herbal tradition. It is used for fevers, rheumatism, toxicity of the bowels, and general debility. It is believed to enhance memory and is used as a liver tonic.

The FDA recognizes gentian as generally safe and extracts of gentian are used in a variety of anti-smoking products, cosmetics and foods. Gentian is traditionally used as an herbal treatment for wounds; animal studies have shown it to have a measurable anti-inflammatory and wound-healing effect. Gentian is used internally as a remedy for sore throat and arthritic inflammation. Also, it is used in liquors and schnapps, and is an important ingredient in Angostura bitters.

Gentian has given excellent results in several forms of digestive disease. Clinical or in vivo tests routinely demonstrate the plant's ability to promote secretion of digestive juices. Gentiopicroside, a constituent, has antimalarial and antiamebic properties.

The bitter taste of gentian is due to bitter iridoid glycosides. Gentian contains several alkaloids. Additionally it contains the constituents: xanthones, triterpenes, pectin, tannin, mucilage and sugar.

It has been shown to reflexively stimulate the gallbladder and pancreas, and mucous membranes of the stomach, thus contributing to an increase secretion of digestive juices and enzymes. Gentian has an effect on the vascular system. The abdominal organs are better fed by blood and there is a slight rise in blood pressure. Gentian can raise blood sugar levels.

Gentian root helps liver and gallbladder-related issues. The plant is indicated in the treatment of jaundice and liver ailments; Gentian can be used to stimulate the flow of bile, relieving various liver and gallbladder problems.

A general feeling of well being comes from an invigorated blood supply and the properties that cause the Gentian stimulate circulation throughout the body. Oxygenation of cells increases as more blood flows through the body and, as a result, individuals feel more energetic. Gentian health benefits can be attributed to its abundance of anti-oxidants, such as xanthones and phytonutrients, which helps strengthen the immune system, reduce fever and alleviate cold symptoms. Consuming gentian root also increases the number of leucocytes and red blood cells in the body, which support a healthy immune system.

Gentian preparations have been found to most effective if administration precedes mealtimes by about one-half hour. Its activity begins about five minutes after reaching the stomach, as digestive juices begin to flow and the secretion of bile increases. Whatever level of digestive liquid is achieved in 30 minutes will maintained for 2-3 hour without increasing further. This provides for better digestion of fats and proteins.

Before taking gentian root, talk to your doctor, especially if on any type of prescription medication. This bitter herb should not be taken in the case of gastric ulcers. It is also not recommended in large doses. Gentian root has a wonderful healing value, but its potency should be respected.

Not to be used if gastric or duodenal ulcers are present. It is not recommended being used for a period longer than 3 weeks when treating states of debility or acute weakness.



Be sure to try NSP's Liver Cleanse Formula (100 caps), All Cell Detox (100 caps) or Digestive Bitters Tonic (4 fl. oz.).

References:

<http://www.diet-and-health.net/Naturopathy/Gentian.html>
http://www.springboard4health.com/notebook/herbs_gentian.html
<http://www.herbal-supplement-resource.com/gentian-root.html>
<http://www.brighthub.com/health/alternative-medicine/articles/59081.aspx>
<http://www.herbalremediesinfo.com/gentian-health-benefits.html>

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Yours in Good Health!

Sincerely,

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