



Lobelia

Lobelia

Lobelia

Other names for lobelia include asthma weed, bladderpod, cardinal flower, eye-bright, gagroot, great lobelia, Indian pink, Indian tobacco, pukeweed, rapuntium inflatum, and vomitwort.

Lobelia (*Lobelia inflata*), also called Indian tobacco, has a long history of use as an herbal remedy for respiratory conditions such as asthma, bronchitis, pneumonia, and cough. Historically, Native Americans smoked lobelia as a treatment for asthma. In the 19th century, American physicians prescribed lobelia to cause vomiting in order to remove toxins from the body. Because of this, it earned the name "puke weed." Today, lobelia is sometimes suggested to help clear mucus from the respiratory tract, including the throat, lungs, and bronchial tubes. Although few studies have evaluated the safety and effectiveness of lobelia, some herbalists today use lobelia as part of a comprehensive treatment plan for asthma. An active ingredient in the lobelia plant, lobeline, was thought to be similar to nicotine in its effect on the body. For this reason, lobeline was once used as a nicotine substitute in many anti-smoking products and preparations designed to break the smoking habit.



The American herbalist Samuel Thomson popularized the herb in the western world; he courted controversy by his medicinal use of lobelia as an emetic. Thomson would often prescribe the herb to induce vomiting in a controversial herbal-healing regimen centered on lobelia devised by him. The lobelia possesses relatively high amounts of the essential nutrients such as manganese, as well as vitamin A, and vitamin C. These days, herbalists use lobelia as a blood cleansing remedy as well as a respiratory stimulant for the treatment of bronchial and spasmodic asthma. Also it is commonly used for chronic cases of bronchitis. The main constituent in lobelia is the alkaloid called lobeline; this compound stimulates deeper breathing and increases rates of respiration in the body of a person. The lobelia acts as a relaxant on tense muscles when it is applied externally; it is useful in the treatment of chronic sprains and certain types of problems affecting the spinal region.

Folklore

Used as a Ceremonial (Emetic) in religious ceremonies by some Native American tribes, lobelia was used extensively by Native American peoples in their ceremonies in the same way as they used tobacco. The belief was that the smoking of the herb could ward off storms. It was also placed on graves, and employed in the rain

dances. Native Americans also used the lobelia to prepare love potions and employed the herb as an antidote to such love charms. The lobelia also had practical uses; it was often burnt to smoke away gnats from a place. An infusion of plant was taken to vomit and cure a tobacco or whiskey habit or as a love or anti-love medicine. A decoction of the plant was taken to counteract sickness produced by witchcraft. It was believed by some native North American Indian tribes that if the finely ground roots were secretly added to the food of an arguing couple they would love each other again. The plant was known to the Penobscot Indians and was widely used in New England long before the time of Samuel Thomson, who is credited with its discovery.

Once it was discovered by Europeans and taken back to England they also used it for many illnesses. Lobelia is still used today as an alternative medicine in many parts of the world. Medical research has found the plants constituents to be Piperidine alkaloids including Lobeline, and other carboxylic acids as well as isolobelanine, gum, resin, chlorophyll, fixed oil, lignin, salts of lime and potassium, with ferric oxide.

Lobeline stimulates the respiratory center of the brain, producing stronger and deeper breathing, making it very useful in treating many respiratory complaints, such as asthma, chronic bronchitis, whooping cough, spasmodic croup, and pneumonia. While at the same time isolobelanine, relaxes the respiratory and neuro-muscular system and acts as a nervine and antispasmodic. It is a most useful systemic relaxant and a holistic combination of stimulation and relaxation. The seeds contain a much higher percentage of lobeline than the rest of the plant. The whole plant is used as an analgesic, cathartic, emetic, expectorant, diaphoretic, anti-asthmatic, stimulant, antispasmodic, narcotic, and sedative. It is currently used to treat convulsive and inflammatory disorders such as epilepsy, hysterical convulsions, traumatic injuries, tetanus, sores and abscesses, colds and fevers, diphtheria and tonsillitis. It is used in some antismoking products and also used for scorpion and snakebites and to induce nausea and vomiting. A poultice of the root has been applied in treating pleurisy, rheumatism, tennis elbow, whiplash injuries, boils or ulcers and hard to heal sores. Lobelia is still used today as an alternative medicine in many parts of the world.

The active ingredient in the lobelia plant, lobeline, was thought to be similar to nicotine in its effect on the body. Researchers now think that lobeline may actually reduce the effects of nicotine in the body, particularly the release of dopamine. Dopamine is a brain chemical that plays a number of important roles in the brain. It is also involved in drug addiction, so researchers think that lobeline may have some potential in treating addiction

Medicinal Uses and Indications:

It is sometimes suggested for the treatment of the following respiratory problems:

- Asthma
- Bronchitis
- Cough

Precautions:

The use of herbs is a time-honored approach to strengthening the body and treating disease. Herbs, however, contain substances that can trigger side effects and interact with other herbs, supplements, or medications. For these reasons, herbs should be taken with care, under the supervision a health care provider.

Lobelia is considered a potentially toxic herb. It can cause serious side effects, such as profuse sweating, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, tremors, rapid heartbeat, mental confusion, convulsions, hypothermia, and possibly even coma.

People with high blood pressure, heart disease, liver disease, kidney disease, tobacco sensitivity, paralysis, seizure disorder, and shortness of breath and those recovering from shock should not take lobelia.

Pregnant and breast feeding women should also avoid this herb.

Possible Interactions:

Based on some of the chemicals contained in lobelia, use caution with the following medications:

- Psychiatric medications -- including anti-depressants, anti-anxiety agents, and stimulants (such as those taken for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder)
- Nicotine and Nicotine substitutes
- Certain stop-smoking medications that affect dopamine levels in the brain.



Be sure to try NSP's [Lobelia \(100 caps\)](#) from Nature's Sunshine. You can see other related products [clicking here](#).

References

- <http://www.umm.edu/altmed/articles/lobelia-000264.htm>
- http://www.altnature.com/gallery/Blue_Lobelia.htm
- http://www.herbs2000.com/herbs/herbs_lobelia.htm

Yours in Good Health!

Sincerely,

Chris Ritchason
Dr. Jack & Verlyn Ritchason, Founders
The Back to Herbs Team

Disclaimer: We do not directly dispense medical advice or prescribe the use of herbs or supplements as a form of treatment for illness. The information found on this Web Site is for educational purposes only to empower people with knowledge to take care of their own health. We disclaim any liability if the reader uses or prescribes any remedies, natural or otherwise, for him/herself or another. Historically all of these herbs & vitamin supplements may nutritionally support the bodies biological systems. Please consult a licensed health professional should a need be indicated.

This information has been provided by:
Natures Better Way
PO Box 261 - 880 W Dryden Rd
Metamora, Mi 48455
810-678-3131 - erkfitz@erkfitz.com