

The Longwood Herbal Task Force
(<http://www.mcp.edu/herbal.default.htm>) and
The Center for Holistic Pediatric Education and Research
(<http://www.childrenshospital.org/holistic/>)

Patient Fact Sheet

CHAMOMILE

CHAMOMILE is a common herb with many tiny yellow flower heads. It is a member of the daisy family. It has been used as a medicine since ancient times. There are two main kinds: German chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*) and Roman chamomile (*Anthemis nobilis*). Most of the research has been done on German chamomile. Chamomile is used on the skin in creams or salves, or taken by mouth as a tea or an alcohol tincture.

WHAT IS IT USED FOR?

- ◆ Chamomile is used on the skin for many different problems including poison ivy, chicken pox, diaper rash and other kinds of **rashes**. It is also used for **eczema**, **hemorrhoids**, and **cuts and scrapes**.
- ◆ It is used in a mouthwash for **mouth sores**.
- ◆ The tea is used as a mild sedative to treat **anxiety** (nervousness) and **insomnia** (sleep problems).
- ◆ It is also used for digestive problems including **indigestion**, **diarrhea**, and **nausea**.
- ◆ Small amounts of chamomile tea are sometimes given to babies with **colic**.

WHAT HAVE STUDIES SHOWN?

- ◆ The results of studies are mixed, but chamomile creams may decrease irritation and swelling from **rashes**.
- ◆ In one study, a chamomile cream was helpful for **eczema**.
- ◆ The results of studies are mixed, but a chamomile mouthwash may help **mouth sores** from radiation or chemotherapy to heal.
- ◆ Substances in chamomile decrease **anxiety** (nervousness) in animals, but there are no studies of chamomile's use to treat anxiety in people.
- ◆ There are no human studies of chamomile's use to help with **insomnia** or **sleep problems**.
- ◆ There are no human studies of chamomile's use to treat **indigestion**, **gas**, **nausea**, or **ulcers**.
- ◆ In one study in children with **diarrhea**, the diarrhea stopped sooner in children who took a combination of chamomile extract and apple pectin than in children who did not.
- ◆ In babies with **colic**, a tea containing chamomile and other herbs decreased crying in more than half of the babies in one study.

(continued)

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS?

Allergic reactions (including hayfever symptoms and rashes) to chamomile are possible. They are more common in people who are allergic to ragweed and other members of the daisy family.

No long-term problems have been found from taking chamomile.

WILL IT INTERFERE WITH MY OTHER MEDICATIONS OR MY MEDICAL CONDITION?

- ◆ Chamomile is not recommended for people with hayfever, because it may make the hayfever worse.
- ◆ Tinctures are not recommended for children, pregnant women or people with alcoholism or severe liver disease, because they contain alcohol.

IS IT SAFE FOR CHILDREN AND PREGNANT WOMEN?

There are no studies of chamomile's safety for children and women who are pregnant or breastfeeding. There have also not been any reports of problems.

WHAT ARE TYPICAL DOSAGES?

Adult doses are usually one cup of tea, or 1-4 ml of tincture (1:1 in 45% alcohol), three times daily by mouth.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Always tell your doctor or nurse practitioner if you are taking any herb, and before starting any new one. Your health care provider needs to know everything you are taking in order to help you make decisions about your health care. Some herbs can cause problems with other herbs, dietary supplements, or medications.

SEE ALSO:

Complete Monograph: <http://www.mcp.edu/herbal/chamomile/chamomile.pdf>

Clinician Information Summary: <http://www.mcp.edu/herbal/chamomile/chamomile.cis.pdf>