

Patient Fact Sheet

DANDELION

DANDELION (*Taraxacum officinalis*) is a common flowering weed. The leaves and roots are used herbal medicine; the leaves can also be eaten in salads, and the roots roasted and used as a coffee substitute. Dandelion is available as fresh or dried leaves or roots for tea, or dried in capsules. The main active ingredients are called *sesquiterpene lactones*.

WHAT IS IT USED FOR?

- ◆ Dandelion is used as a diuretic (to increase urine output and decrease fluid in the body).
- ◆ It is also used for liver and gall bladder problems.
- ◆ It has been recommended as a mild laxative (to cause bowel movements).
- ◆ It is included in some herbal weight-loss pills.

WHAT HAVE STUDIES SHOWN?

- ◆ There are no scientific studies in humans of any of dandelion's effects.
- ◆ In animal studies, dandelion increases **urine output**.
- ◆ Also in animal studies, dandelion increases the flow of bile from the **gall bladder**. There are no studies in humans of dandelion's use for any liver or gallbladder problem.
- ◆ In animals, dandelion causes **weight loss**, but only increasing urine output, not by causing loss of fat.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS?

- ◆ Allergic reactions (including itching and hives) are possible.
- ◆ Too much dandelion could cause dehydration.

No long-term problems have been reported from dandelion.

IS IT SAFE FOR CHILDREN AND PREGNANT WOMEN?

There are no studies showing whether dandelion is safe for children or for women who are pregnant or nursing. No problems have been reported.

(continued)

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

- ◆ People with biliary obstruction (blocked bile duct), cholecystitis (gall bladder disease) or ileus (a totally inactive bowel, sometimes caused by surgery) should not take dandelion.
- ◆ People who take diuretic medications (to increase urine output) should not take dandelion as well.

WHAT ARE TYPICAL DOSAGES?

Doses vary, but some herbalists recommend the following doses for adults:

- ◆ Fresh or dried leaves: 4-10 grams daily by mouth.
- ◆ Fresh leaf juice: 1 tsp twice daily by mouth.
- ◆ Fresh roots: 2-8 grams daily by mouth.
- ◆ Dried powdered extract: 250-1000 mg three or four times daily by mouth.
- ◆ Tea: One ounce of fresh leaves steeped in 2 cups boiling water for ten minutes. OR 2-3 tsp of dried root boiled in 1 cup water for 15 minutes.

Follow your health care provider's instructions.

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 herb. Your health care provider needs to know everything you are taking to help you make decisions about your health care. Herbs can cause problems with other herbs, dietary supplements, or medications.
- ◆ Herbal products may contain chemicals or other species of plants.

SEE ALSO:

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

Dandelion Clinician Information Summary:

<http://www.mcp.edu/herbal/dandelion/dandelion.cis.pdf>