



# Cascara Sagrada

Sometimes called "the world's favorite laxative," and is famous as a safe, natural way to cleanse the colon (usually acting overnight). Cascara also stimulates the production of gastric juices, promoting good digestion, as well as bile secretions, which encourages healthy gallbladder function.

**Information:** Herbals/Nutritionals/Medicinals can be very strong. Consequently, if they are not tailored to your specific needs, they can do more harm than good. This information is meant to be used by your VHC Medical Team and personal Physician as they build your Total Health Plan. Never attempt to adjust your prescribed medications and/or Natural Treatments without your physician's and Medical Team's knowledge and guidance. Since herbals/nutritionals and medications can interact with each other, it is always advisable to consult with your health care provider and The Vibrant Health Community at [www.VibrantHealthCommunity.com](http://www.VibrantHealthCommunity.com) (or call 1-866-378-8253) before starting or changing your program.

**Botanical:** *Rhamnus purshiana* (also known as *Frangula purshiana*)

**Family:** *Rhamnaceae* (buckthorn)

**Other common names:** Buckthorn, Chittembark, Sacred Bark, California Buckthorn, Cascara Buckthorn, Persian Bark, Purshiana Bark

**History:** Cascara Sagrada, also known as California Buckthorn, is a hardy, deciduous, evergreen tree that is native to the northwest Pacific Coast, ranging from British Columbia to California. It thrives in well-drained, neutral-to-acid soil in sun or partial shade and may grow to a height of forty feet. The bark is peeled from the tree, collected and dried in the shade and becomes milder and less emetic for pharmaceutical purposes when aged for three years. Cascara Sagrada bark should always be aged for at least one year to allow certain chemical changes to occur that reduce griping effects. It was used by many tribes of Native Americans for its cathartic properties, and early Spanish priests of Mendocino, California, learned of its use from the locals, calling Cascara "Sacred Bark," and holding it in very high esteem. Cascara eventually became adopted by the medical profession, and it was first commercially marketed by a pharmaceutical company in 1877 (Parke-Davis) and became officially listed in the *United States Pharmacopoeial* in 1890. It is interesting to note that no synthetic substance can equal the mild and speedy action of the "holy bark,"

and these trees were almost endangered, when, early in the twentieth century, many of them were destroyed. Some of the constituents included in Cascara Sagrada include aloe-emodin, beta-carotene, glycosides, malic acid, calcium, iron, linoleic acid, magnesium, manganese, phosphorus, potassium, selenium, silicon, zinc, B-vitamins and vitamin C.

**Beneficial Uses:** Cascara is a mild but extremely effective colon cleanser and laxative that acts principally on the large intestine. The bark is rich in hormone-like oils that promote peristaltic action (contractions) in the intestinal canal and is considered excellent for cleansing and detoxifying programs, and is also considered suitable use by delicate and elderly persons. Furthermore, Cascara is said to improve the tone of the bowels and colon, helping the system to operate normally and naturally. The basis of the herb's efficacy is thought to be the presence of anthraquinones - either free (i.e., aloe-emodin) that remain in the intestines and irritate the intestinal wall to stimulate elimination - or as sugar

derivatives (glycosides), which are absorbed into the intestines and bloodstream and go on to stimulate the nerve center in the lower part of the intestine. Cascara is helpful in treating colon disorders, such as chronic hardening of the stool, diverticulosis, constipation, hemorrhoids and intestinal parasitic infestation.

Cascara Sagrada is believed to be beneficial for treating liver disorders, such as jaundice, etc. The herb is also thought to help a sluggish gallbladder by increasing the flow of bile and has been said to help the body rid itself of gallstones.

As a fine stomachic, Cascara is considered a tonic and bitter that stimulates the production of gastric juices, which in turn, speeds up the digestive process and helps promote good digestion. The herb is also said to pep up the appetite.

Some preliminary research has indicated that Cascara Sagrada might be useful as an antiviral that could be effective against herpes simplex virus II and *vaccinia* virus.

**Contraindications:** Excessive amounts of Cascara Sagrada should not be taken (many times the recommended dose), nor should it be used for prolonged periods of time (more than seven days). It is not recommended for pregnant women, and nursing mothers should avoid Cascara, as the bark's cathartic properties may be transmitted to the baby. People suffering from ulcers, appendicitis, irritable bowel syndrome or intestinal obstruction should avoid Cascara. Because of its laxative properties, Cascara may result in a loss of electrolytes and potassium.