



# Gentian

For three thousand years, **Gentian** has been used to treat digestive disorders. Its bitter qualities stimulate production of gastric juices and bile, helping to relieve dyspepsia, morning sickness, flatulence, indigestion and liver problems.

**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:** *Gentiana lutea*

**Family:** *Gentianaceae* (gentian)

**Other common names:** Bitterwort, Sampson's Snakeroot, Bitter Root, Yellow Gentian, Felwort, Gentiane Jaune, Enzianwurzel, Bitterwurz

**History:** Gentian is an intensely bitter herb that has been used in different cultures since ancient times to treat digestive disorders and to stimulate the appetite. Gentians with flowers of varied color that are distributed throughout the temperate regions and high mountains of the world; however, their medicinal applications are virtually interchangeable. In both Chinese and Korean, the terms for Gentian can be translated literally as "dragon gallbladder herb," which attests to Gentian's ability to treat fiery inflammations of the gallbladder. In Chinese medicine, other species of Gentian have been used and have similar constituents. These are referred to as *longdan*, and they are used for jaundice, hepatitis, conjunctivitis, urinary tract infections, pruritis and eczema. During the Middle Ages, Gentian was commonly employed as an antidote to poison, and later, Father Kneipp, a nineteenth-century healer who was well known in Europe, strongly recommended the use of Gentian bitters in a little cordial made with Gentian extract to stop the discomfort of food that was felt to be heavy in the stomach and troublesome. Most people find the neutral taste of the capsules preferable to the extremely bitter taste of drinks made with Gentian bitters. Among Gentian's constituents are iridoids including 4% gentiopicrosides (gentiopicrin and

amarogentin - main bitter principle) and swertiamarin, alkaloids (gentianine and gentialutine), xanthenes (gentisein, gentisin, isogentisin, gentioside, trimethoxyxanthone), caffeic and sinapic acids, linalool, limonene, calcium, iron, magnesium, manganese, phosphorus, potassium, selenium, zinc, B-vitamins and vitamin C.

**Beneficial Uses:** For indigestion, Gentian is one of the most useful of the bitter vegetable tonics. Taken thirty minutes before eating, it is thought to stimulate the digestive juices, increase pancreatic activity and the production of bile (good for the liver, gallbladder and stones), and boost the blood supply to the digestive tract and intestines. It is said to be excellent for preventing gas.

The strong bitter principle in Gentian is considered a sialagogue that increases saliva production. It is said that bitters stimulate the vagus nerve reflex (activated by bitter receptors at the back of the tongue) to secrete digestive juices.

Further supporting its beneficial effects on liver function, the increased bile produced by Gentian is thought to be particularly helpful in emulsifying and

digesting fat and protein and easing liver malfunction and jaundice.

Gentian is said to strengthen the entire human system by increasing vascular circulation and stimulating the activities of many glands and organs by ensuring a healthy blood supply.

As an overall tonic, Gentian has been useful in treating those in a state of exhaustion from chronic disease or in cases of general debility. It stimulates the appetite, which is also thought to be useful in treating anorexia.

Another benefit attributed to Gentian is its mild ability to clean the bowel and effectively, slowly cleanse hardened morbid matter from the colon. As a milk laxative, it Promotes peristalsis (muscular contractions of the bowel), thus encouraging movement of waste from the body. It is believed to

prevent intestinal infection and help rebalance intestinal flora, which is helpful for preventing serious colorectal disease.

Herbalists have also used Gentian to help calm hysteria and decrease fever.

Gentian has been known expel worms and kill plasmodia (organisms that cause malaria) and is thought to be more effective than quinine.

**Contraindications:** Pregnant women or those with high blood pressure or chronic gastrointestinal problems should use Gentian only under supervision of a physician. Avoid Gentian if you have diarrhea caused by poor digestion, or if you have excess stomach acid, heartburn, peptic ulcer disease or gastritis. Older children and adults over sixty-five should take Gentian only with direction from a health care provider.

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