



Kudzu

A staple in Japanese and Chinese herbal medicine, **Kudzu** has been a traditional treatment for stiff neck, headache, muscle tension and neurological conditions. For over two thousand years, Chinese physicians have relied on it to reduce alcohol abuse, relieve respiratory problems and counteract poisons.

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 (or call 1-866-378-8253) before starting or changing your program.

Botanical: *Pueraria lobata*

Family: *Fabaceae* (legume)

Other common names: Kuzu, Pueraria, Gwat Gun, Ge Gan, Pueraria Root, Japanese Arrowroot

History: The creeping Kudzu vine is native to Japan and China and was brought to the United States in the twentieth century as a noble experiment to prevent soil erosion and to provide fodder for animals. What is a protected vine in the "Land of the Rising Sun" has been called the "Green Menace of the South" in the United States. Kudzu is a coarse, high-climbing, and fast-growing plant that can grow one foot per day. It has engulfed many of the southeastern states, covering and killing trees and other growth and thriving in its warm climate, well-drained soil and sun. The root is used for medicinal purposes and may be traced back for centuries. Kudzu was first mentioned in traditional Chinese medicine in the *Shen Nong Canon of Herbs*, begun during the Han dynasty (206 B.C.- A.D.23), as a treatment for headache, stiff neck with pain due to high blood pressure and alcohol abuse. Its use in modern Chinese medicine includes the treatment of angina pectoris. Kudzu has many uses in Japan, including medicine, food and commercial products. Kudzu starch is used for thickening soups and noodle making, and the stems yield an important fiber called *kokemp* that is important in the manufacture of cloth and paper. Chemical constituents in Kudzu include p-coumeric acid, quercetin, calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, starch, vitamin B-2, puerarin, genistein, daidzin and daidzein.

Beneficial Uses: Kudzu has long been a treatment for alcohol abuse in the Orient. The tea that is made from Kudzu is called *xing-jiu-ling*, which is literally translated as "sober up." Researchers in Indiana University discovered two compounds in Kudzu that alter the enzymes that break down alcohol in the liver, and as a result, an alcohol byproduct, acetaldehyde, builds up, producing nausea, facial redness and general discomfort in the subject. The chemicals daidzin and daidzein in the roots and flowers appear to suppress the appetite for alcohol. In a paper published in *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, a team of researchers from Harvard Medical School affiliate, McLean Hospital, reported that moderately heavy drinkers given the herb extract in capsule form for a week before taking part in a drinking experiment consumed significantly less alcohol than those who got a placebo, saying, "All of the subjects, except one, reduced their alcoholic intake."

Traditional herbalists have valued the starch content in Kudzu as a way to soothe minor digestive system problems and gastrointestinal discomforts such as heartburn, acid indigestion, abdominal cramps, diarrhea, gas, colitis, dysentery, gastritis, nausea and vomiting.

Kudzu could be helpful in the treatment of congestive heart failure and heart attack. Flavonoid-like substances in Kudzu appear to help blood flow through the coronary arteries, lower blood pressure and improve circulation; and one compound in Kudzu, puerarin, is a beta-blocker, which seems to reduce a racing pulse induced by stress.

Traditional Chinese physicians called Kudzu a sweet, cooling tonic herb that increases perspiration and reduces fever. It is said to treat feverish illnesses, sore throats, tonsillitis, colds and influenza. The herb is also thought to remedy general respiratory problems, lung congestion and coughing.

In treating pain, Kudzu has been used for two thousand years to relieve muscular tension in the neck, back and shoulders, headache (particularly when induced by high blood pressure), hangovers, neuralgia, vertigo and stiff neck.

Kudzu has helped to counteract poisons, including snakebite and alcohol poisoning.

The long history of Kudzu's varied benefits also includes the treatment of sudden acute deafness, tinnitus and spasms.

Data from clinical trials suggest that kudzu may improve symptoms such as hot flushes and night sweats in peri-menopausal women and cognitive function in postmenopausal women.

Contraindications: Taking antibiotics may nullify the effect of Kudzu. Because Kudzu has estrogenic effects, individuals with hormone-sensitive cancers and those taking Tamoxifen should avoid it.

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