



# Licorice Root

Delicious **Licorice** will help to keep your lungs clear, your digestive tract calm, your colon cleansed and your adrenal gland functioning properly. Alexander the Great gave his soldiers Licorice to boost their energy before a battle, so why not try some if you are feeling exhausted and stressed? Licorice is a *reliable and pleasant way to soothe a sore throat*.

**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:** *Glycyrrhiza glabra*

**Family:** *Leguminosae* (legume) - *Fabaceae* (pea)

**Other common names:** The Great Harmonizer, Gan Cao, Sweet Wood, Grandfather Herb, Liquorice, Sweet Licorice.

**History:** Licorice is a cultivated crop in many places that grows slowly from seed (generally from two to six feet in height), but is difficult to eradicate when well established. Licorice is a very important commercial crop that is a mainstay in herbal medicine, as well as a flavoring for confectionery, snuff, foods, cough syrups and tobacco. As a matter of fact, although Licorice is best known in the United States as a flavoring and candy, ninety percent of Licorice imports are actually used to flavor tobacco products. Licorice has been used as one of the key herbs in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) for over three thousand years, and its use is associated with longevity. It was (and is) considered a tonic to rejuvenate the heart and spleen, treat ulcers, coughs, colds and digestive complaints and was mentioned in the *Shen Nong Canon of Herbs* listings of more than 365 plants and drugs that was compiled in China about two thousand years ago.

In the West, the Greeks learned about Licorice from the Sythians as a treatment for coughs as long ago as the third century B.C., the very same application for which it is still used today. Alexander the Great

supplied his troops with rations that included Licorice sticks to alleviate thirst and boost energy before battles. Both Hippocrates and Pliny the Elder described the medical benefits of Licorice, as did Dioscorides, who gave the plant its botanical name, *Glycyrrhiza*, which is derived from the Greek words, *glukus*, meaning "sweet" and *riza*, meaning "root," referring to the sweet flavor of the dried roots, which may be chewed like candy. Some of the chemical constituents in Licorice include the saponin, glycyrrhizic acid (the chief active ingredient that is fifty times sweeter than sugar cane with cortisone-like effects), plant sterols, other sugars (glucose, mannose, sucrose), starch, resin, a trace of tannin, essential oil, amino acids, flavonoids, isoflavonoids, coumarins, lignin, mannitol, phenol, quercetin, salicylic acid, thymol, calcium, choline, iron, magnesium, manganese, phosphorus, potassium, selenium, silicon, zinc, beta-carotene, B-vitamins and vitamin C. Interestingly, archaeologists recently discovered a piece of Licorice from the eighth century that still possessed its active chemical principles. In addition to all of its historical medicinal applications, modern herbalists also commonly use Licorice to treat adrenal insufficiencies, such as hypoglycemia

and to counteract stress and to purify the liver and blood (this must always be used under the auspices of a knowledgeable health care provider). The roots are widely used in European herbal medicine.

**Beneficial Uses:** Licorice has been used for thousands of years as a superior expectorant that is primarily used for respiratory problems. The herb helps loosen phlegm and ease non-productive coughs. It is also very helpful for bronchitis, congestion and colds. As a demulcent, Licorice soothes mucous membranes and helps relieve sore throats. It is a wonderfully effective ingredient in cough medicines and cough drops as both a pleasant flavoring, as well as an expectorant and soothing agent.

As an anti-inflammatory, the glycyrrhizinic acid activity in Licorice seems related to the way corticoids are released from the adrenal glands, which is helpful in treating arthritis, rheumatism and stiff, painful joints. The herb stimulates production of cortisone and aldosterone, which appear to be effective anti-inflammatory agents.

Licorice is a wonderful support for good digestion and healthy gastrointestinal system. As a demulcent, the herb soothes the mucous membranes and protects the stomach and intestines. It has been known to coat the stomach's lining with a mucus, rather than restraining the secretion of gastric acid (which would result in incomplete digestion) and reduce the activity of pepsin.

Glycyrrhizinic acid also helps to inhibit enzymes that dismantle prostaglandins, which will help the stomach and upper intestine, allowing ulcers to heal more quickly. This activity may also protect the colon and treat ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, Celiac disease, gastritis and peptic ulcer.

As an effective antibacterial, the glycyrrhizinic acid in Licorice seems to stop the growth of many bacteria and is a further support for the respiratory tract by treating infection. The Chinese utilize Licorice as a powerful antitoxin and use it for the treatment of pesticide poisoning. It may also curb malaria.

As an antiviral, Licorice combats viruses, including influenza-A, hepatitis-B, Epstein-Barr virus (chronic fatigue) and holds promise for the treatment of HIV. Studies have shown Licorice to be effective in treating viral hepatitis, particularly chronic active hepatitis (under a doctor's care), due to its well-documented antiviral activity.

Licorice is an age-old, mild laxative that is also known to cleanse the colon. It is considered an "alterative," which is a cleansing stimulant that is effective in removing toxins and wastes from the body. It is also

thought to be good for bladder and kidney ailment (under a physician's care).

Modern herbalists commonly use Licorice to sustain adrenal function and treat adrenal insufficiencies, including hypoglycemia and Addison's disease. It is also used to purify the liver, the body's detoxification center, helping its defenses against liver diseases, such as cirrhosis and hepatitis, but again this application must always be conducted under your doctor's guidance.

Licorice is sometimes called an adrenal-hormonal that is said to stimulate the production of interferon, the agent thought to be the key in preventing and treating immune-response deficiency diseases. The herb contains a natural hormone that induces the adrenal cortex to produce larger amounts of cortisone and aldosterone and assists the body to handle stress and relieve exhaustion.

Licorice is believed to produce mild estrogenic effects and is said to normalize ovulation in women experiencing infrequent menstruation and also ease menopausal symptoms. The active ingredient, glycyrrhizic acid, is known to be fifty-times sweeter than sugar cane, but it does not promote thirst; it actually will alleviate thirst.

Licorice regulates low blood sugar. The glycyrrhizin content has a chemical structure similar that of human steroid hormones, which appear to help raise blood sugar levels to normal.

**Contraindications:** Pregnant women, diabetics and those with high blood pressure should avoid this herb. People suffering from heart disease should not use Licorice unless under a physician's care. According to the German Commission E monograph, Licorice supplements are contraindicated in people with liver and kidney disorders, and thus, people with kidney disease, gallbladder disease and cirrhosis should avoid this herb. Large doses of Licorice may induce sodium retention and potassium depletion and can lead to hypertension and edema. Use of Licorice should be done under the supervision of a health care provider or qualified practitioner. The herb is not meant for long term use and should not be taken for more than seven days in a row. Long-term intake of products containing more than one gram of glycyrrhizin (the amount in approximately ten grams of root, which is far in excess of the daily dosage recommended by this product) is the usual amount required to cause these types of effects. Do not take Licorice without speaking with your physician if you take potassium, laxatives, the heart medication, Digoxin (Lanoxicaps®, Lanoxin®, Lanoxin Pediatric®) or prescription diuretics (which may lead to loss of potassium, which may cause fatigue, muscle cramps, headaches, swelling, increase urination,

breathlessness or high blood pressure). Other possible drug interactions with any Licorice product include potentiation of anticoagulants and possible

interference with hormonal therapy due to estrogenic activity of Licorice (including decreased testosterone and birth control pills).

The information presented here by [www.DrMarilynTucker.com](http://www.DrMarilynTucker.com) is intended for educational purposes only. These statements have not been evaluated by the FDA and are not intended to diagnose, cure, treat or prevent disease. Individual results vary.