



# Mayapple

**Mayapple** is a *strong and powerful purgative* that has been used historically and primarily to regulate bowel and liver function. It is believed to be a strong stimulant that efficiently *cleanses and removes waste products from the body*, and it has been used to treat constipation, jaundice and other disorders associated with waste product buildup. Native Americans also used Mayapple to remove warts and expel worms from the intestines.

**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:** *Podophyllum peltatum* (American)\*

**Family:** *Berberidaceae* (barberry)

**Other common names:** American Mandrake Root\*, Mandrake, Raccoon Berry, Wild Lemon, Indian Apple, Duck's Foot, Hog Apple, Umbrella Plant, Ground Lemon

**\*Note:** *Mayapple is sometimes called Mandrake or American Mandrake, but it should never be confused with European Mandrake, an entirely different plant of the poisonous nightshade family.*

**History:** Mayapple is a perennial plant that is native to and grows abundantly in North America and is sometimes called Mandrake,\* but should not be mistaken for European Mandrake (*Mandragora officinarum* - a poisonous herb of the nightshade family), and Mayapple thrives in moist, humus-rich, well-drained soil in woodlands and clearings in sheltered semi-shade. It is an ornamental plant with a single, forked stem that is topped by two umbrella-like leaves and a solitary, waxy, white flower dropping from the fork of the stem. After the flower blooms in May, it then produces a pulpy, lemon-yellow berry that ripens in July and August, and that fruit is the only part of the plant that is not poisonous and may be eaten (but it is rather tasteless). The plant usually grows in patches and may reach a height of eighteen inches, but young leaves may be damaged by frost. In the autumn, the roots are collected, dried and crushed into powder, and the powdered rhizomes (roots) are used as a potent purgative. This application was well-known to Native Americans long before it was "rediscovered" in conventional

American medicine and listed in the *United States Pharmacopoeia* from 1820 to 1926. Native Americans used minute doses as a purgative, emetic, liver tonic and vermifuge (to destroy and expel worms), as well as a topical application in removing warts. The Menominee tribe used it on plants and potato crops as an effective insecticide, a use that is now being studied extensively in laboratories. It is an acrid, caustic herb with an unpleasant odor, and because it is so potent, it is not advisable for self-medication in specific applications; therefore, it is always recommended that one should seek an experienced health care provider when using this herb. Some of the constituents in Mayapple are lignins (including the most important, podophyllotoxin) and resin (podophyllin).

**Beneficial Uses:** Mayapple has mainly been used (in controlled dosage) as a very potent purgative cathartic, a strong laxative that causes rapid, watery evacuation of the intestines and bowels. It is said to aid bowel complaints, such as

constipation and other disturbances, due to sluggish action. It is considered an alterative, or agent that cleanses and stimulates the efficient removal of waste products from the system, while at the same time altering and improving the course of an ailment.

Mayapple is said to aid in liver complaints. As a cholagogue, it has been used to stimulate the production and flow of bile (which also aids in the digestive process), and has a reputation for supporting liver function. Some say it has no equal when used for liver ailments and has been used in cases of jaundice, biliousness and for the removal of body obstructions. The eliminative properties of Mayapple (both in the bowel and liver) make it effective for a number of complaints marked by accumulation of waste products in the system (including arthritic and skin problems).

Mayapple is also considered a vermifuge, an agent that destroys and expels worms from the intestinal tract.

Used externally, Mayapple is said to be effective in wart removal, especially helping venereal warts, and the root is also said to possess antiviral properties.

There is a derivative in Mayapple called podophyllotoxin (the agent responsible for removing warts), and recent studies have shown some promising results for its use as a possible treatment for several malignant diseases and malignant growths. In tests, it has been found to stimulate the immune system while suppressing lymph cells and appears to be more toxic to leukemia cells than normal cells. Thus far it is too severe for the digestive tract for practical purposes, but a synthetic derivative is being used in Europe in chemotherapy (trademarked *Vepeside*) for lung and testicle cancers.

**Contraindications:** Pregnant and nursing women should never use Mayapple Root. It is an extremely potent herb and should be used with great caution (it is always advisable to use it in consultation with a physician), and it is subject to restrictions in many countries. It should never be taken in large amounts, as an overdose would likely be fatal. It is considered unsafe as a food by the USFDA. Stop taking Mayapple if you experience shortness of breath, muscle weakness, low blood pressure and fast heart rate. This may be a sign of poisoning. See your doctor right away if you have confusion, dizziness, hallucinations, shaking, ataxia (problems with walking) or loss of consciousness.

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