



Milk Thistle

This remarkable herb is said to have no pharmaceutical equivalent for its *beneficial effects on the liver, spleen and gallbladder*. *Rid yourself of toxins and temporary depression, and boost your immunity* with Milk Thistle. In the meantime, you'll also gain valuable antioxidant protection.

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: *Silybum marianum*

Family: *Compositae* (daisy) - *Asteraceae* (aster)

Other common names: Mary Thistle, Wild Artichoke, Silybum, Marian Thistle, St. Mary's Thistle, Lady Thistle, Holy Thistle

History: Milk Thistle is a stout, spiny annual or perennial that is native to the Mediterranean region and has been naturalized throughout Europe and parts of North America and Australia. This common weed grows to about six feet in height in the dry, rocky soils of fields and waste places. The plant produces a purple flower, and there are distinctive white markings on its leaves, which legend has described as the splashes of the Virgin Mary's milk. Historically, it has been a very popular plant in Europe for its medicinal and dietary qualities and is still a favorite in France as a wholesome, delicious vegetable and as an ingredient in salads. The seeds and leaves are used in herbal medicine, and their use goes back two thousand years. The Greek, Dioscorides, prescribed Milk Thistle to remedy the poison of snakebite, and in the first-century, the Roman, Pliny, wrote that it was excellent for "carrying off bile," meaning that it restored impaired liver function, a claim that has been justified by many modern researchers. In the Middle Ages, the liver was regarded as the seat of emotions (both in Europe and in traditional Chinese medicine), and depression and emotional distress were ultimately thought to be caused by a malfunction of the liver. Consequently, Milk Thistle was commonly prescribed to remedy such ailments, and the herb was widely

used as a spring tonic to provide relief from the pent-up emotions and depression housed in the liver. It was an early remedy for the winter's doldrums and "blues." According to the noted herbalist, Gerard, in his 1597 "*Herball*," Milk Thistle was considered the "best remedy that grows against all melancholy diseases." As a matter of fact, the word "melancholy" is derived from the Greek translation of "black bile," and in Gerard's day, that referred to any liver or biliary derangement. Milk Thistle was also considered a key ingredient in the diets of European wet nurses to ensure a healthy milk supply, and it continued to be used in the nineteenth century for improving the liver, spleen, kidneys, varicose veins and menstrual ailments. The herb lost popularity but interest in it was renewed in the 1950s, when scientific research supported many of the medicinal claims that herbalists had known for centuries. The liver is the body's second largest organ and has often been called the body's toxic waste disposal plant and chemical factory, and Milk Thistle is said to have no pharmaceutical equivalent in the remarkable way in which it benefits and affects the liver. Some of Milk Thistle's constituents include tocopherol sterols (cholesterol, campesterol, stigmasterol and sitosterol), taxifolin, quercetin, dihydrokaempferol, kaempferol, apigenin, naringin, eriodictiol, chrysoeriol, essential

fatty acids, linoleic acid, palmitic acid, beta-carotene, mucilage, flavolignan: (silymarin, a flavonoid that is its most active ingredient, which increases protein synthesis in liver cells by increasing RNA activity and stops absorption of toxins in the liver and a mixture of three compounds silybinin, silidianin, and silychristin, also dehydrosilybin, siliandrin, silybinome, and silyhermin), calcium, iron, magnesium, manganese, phosphorus, potassium, selenium and zinc.

Beneficial Uses: Milk Thistle is known to be extraordinarily useful as a tonic to safeguard the liver from all types of liver disorders. As a free-radical scavenger, it protects the liver from toxins and pollutants by preventing free radical damage, and it also stimulates the production of new liver cells. It is considered a remarkable herb for relieving temporary discomforts associated with cirrhosis, alcoholic poisoning, jaundice, fatty liver, hepatitis and viral hepatitis. Placebo-controlled clinical studies show efficacy in reducing aminotransferases in alcoholic liver disease. A flavonoid complex (silymarin) stimulates liver protein creation, enabling the organ to produce new liver cells and replace the old ones damaged by hepatitis infection or other toxins. Silymarin contains a number of active constituents called flavolignans, which are also used to help protect the liver from poisoning. Milk thistle provides hepatocellular protection by stabilizing hepatic cell membranes. It alters the structure of the outer cell membrane of the hepatocytes in such a way as to prevent the penetration of the liver toxins into the interior of the cell.

In the treatment of hepatitis C, the silymarin in Milk Thistle has been shown to lower liver enzymes and reverse the kind of liver damage common in people with hepatitis C.

Milk Thistle increases the production of bile, the fluid created in the liver that helps to break down fats in the small intestine. This helps to remove (via excretion) testosterone byproducts that cause acne. As a demulcent with mucilaginous properties, it soothes mucous membranes from irritating substances and helps to protect the intestinal lining (reducing inflammation of the intestine), alleviating the constipation of irritable bowel syndrome and Crohn's disease, as well as other inflammatory bowel disorders.

By increasing the bile production and stimulating protein synthesis in the liver, Milk Thistle regulates the digestion of fats and may be beneficial in preventing arteriosclerosis and strokes, in addition to reducing the chances of gallstone formation by promoting total, normal cholesterol levels and helping the liver convert low-density lipoprotein (LDL or "bad cholesterol") into high-density lipoprotein (HDL or "good cholesterol"). Milk Thistle is also thought to prevent cholesterol that has been excreted into the

bile from being reabsorbed into the body. Another compound in Milk Thistle stops the oxidation of LDL cholesterol into a form that creates plaques in the linings of artery walls.

Milk Thistle is believed to detoxify the liver and gallbladder and the poisons that enter our blood stream by enhancing overall liver function. The herb has been effective in countering the toxic effects of nicotine, alcohol, carbon monoxide pollutants, dry-cleaning fluid and cadmium. Thousands of years ago the herb was prescribed to counteract the poison of snakebite, and current research shows that Milk Thistle does, in fact, combat the poisonous activity of many toxins, including the deadly mushroom poisoning of Death Cap.

Milk Thistle is not only a rebuilding herb for the liver and gallbladder. It is believed to also protect the kidneys, brain and other tissues from chemical toxins. Using the herb is believed to protect against inflammation of the bile ducts.

Milk Thistle regulates the digestion of fats and alleviates common stomach problems, such as nausea, lack of appetite and dyspepsia, and it may also help ease abdominal distention and fatigue.

Milk Thistle is thought to help to protect specialized immune cells in the liver known as Kupffer cells by engulfing bacteria, toxins and other invasive matter from entering into the liver and may destroy harmful cells that have entered blood circulation as the first step in spreading to other parts of the body.

According to a clinical summary from Memorial Sloan-Kettering, animal models suggest that flavonoids in Milk Thistle may have antioxidant and anticancer effects. Flavonoids isolated from Milk Thistle have been shown to inhibit malignant colon and prostate cells in rats. However, to date there is no evaluation of survival or quality of life.

Chronic liver damage sometimes results in diabetes, in which the liver is no longer able to respond to insulin, and Milk Thistle has been said to help promote and regulate normal blood sugar levels and may also help to actually lower blood sugar.

Further supporting the issue of healthy blood sugar levels, Milk Thistle's silymarin is thought to control sugar in Type-2 Diabetes. In an article published in *Phytotherapy*, it was noted that the silymarin extracted from seeds of the Milk Thistle showed that this extract can help people significantly lower the amount of sugar bound to haemoglobin in blood, as well as reducing fasting blood sugar levels.

For thousands of years Milk Thistle has been used to promote lactation and increase the production of breast milk in nursing mothers.

Contraindications: Currently, there are no warnings of contraindications with the use of Milk Thistle; however, the herb may reduce the efficacy of birth control pills and medicine to treat infection

(metronidazole, erythromycin, etc.). It is essential that people with diabetes and liver disease should have regular blood tests. There have been rare reports of diarrhea and nausea

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