



Seneca Snake Root

Benefits and uses: Cold, asthma, nausea, vomiting, coughs, bleeding, pleurisy, emphysema, diabetes.

Information: Herbs/Nutritionals/Medicinals can be very strong, consequently, if each one is not tailored to your specific needs, then you can risk 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 herbs/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.

Details

Plant roots often assume a twisted, tortuous shape, so the name snakeroot is an apt one. Unfortunately, it is applied to so many different species, that without a modifier the term is meaningless. Senega root, seneca snakeroot, or just plain senega refers to the yellow root of *Polygala senega* L., a perennial herb (family Polygalaceae) with small white flowers, native to the woodlands of eastern North America from southern Canada to South Carolina.

Senega root was one of the new remedies introduced into medicine after the discovery of America where the Seneca Indians valued it as a cure for rattlesnake bite. Although this usage was probably based purely on the "Doctrine of Signatures," senega subsequently enjoyed great popularity as a nauseant expectorant and was a common ingredient in syrups and similar preparations for coughs and cold. The medication's popularity subsequently declined, and in 1960, it was dropped from The National Formulary. Modern herbalists continue to praise its virtues as an expectorant, diaphoretic (promotes perspiration), sialagogue (increases the flow of saliva), and emetic. It is said to be particularly good for asthma and bronchitis.

Fresh senega root has a pleasant odor reminiscent of wintergreen due to its content of approximately 0.1 % methyl salicylate. The active ingredient, however, is a complex mixture of triterpenoid saponins in the root in a

concentration ranging from 8 to 16%. The saponins act by local irritation on the lining of the stomach, thus causing nausea which in turn stimulates both bronchial secretions and the sweat glands. Large doses cause vomiting and purging.

There is no question about the effectiveness of senega root as an expectorant. Senega root continues to be used in Europe as an ingredient in various syrups, lozenges, and tea mixtures for controlling cough and related throat irritations. If it is utilized in any of these forms, one must be careful to follow the recommended dosage, or stomach upsets will follow. For this and other reasons, the medication is simply not included in any commercial preparations in the United States. The Handbook of Nonprescription Medications lists a large number of cough syrups with their ingredients, none of which contains senega root as an expectorant, so we can only conclude that safer and more effective cough treatments exist. If you need an expectorant, it is probably easier and better to use something other than senega root.

Polygala means "much milk", an allusion to this herb's profuse secretions. A related species, milkwort, is said to increase milk production in nursing mothers. Senega root may be derived from the Native American Seneca tribe, who used it as a remedy for various ailments. Although

other Native American tribes also employed senega root, the Seneca are credited with revealing it to Scottish physician John Tennent (1735), who in turn introduced it to the Western world of medicine.

Native Americans have long used senega root for rheumatism, colds, inflammation, and bleeding wounds. Dr. John Tennent is credited for learning the plant's uses from them and subsequently advancing senega's use in Europe for pleurisy and pleuropneumonia. During the early 19th century, senega root was used as an expectorant cough remedy. Today senega root treats bronchitis tracheitis, emphysema and inflammation of the respiratory tract. Senega's principal constituents are saponins, including senegins. These saponins suppress coughing, while their detergent activity breaks up phlegm. Senega is also thought to stimulate bronchial mucous gland secretion. Saponins in senega root may hold some potential for treating non-insulin dependent diabetes.

In North American and European herbal medicine, senega root is used as an expectorant to treat bronchial asthma, chronic bronchitis, and whooping cough. The root has a stimulant action on the bronchial mucous membranes, promoting the coughing up of mucus from the chest and thereby easing wheezing. In large doses, the root is emetic. It is also thought to promote sweating and to stimulate saliva secretion.

CONSTITUENTS

Senega root contains triterpenoid saponins (including senegins), phenolic acids, methyl salicylate, polygalitol, and plant sterols. The triterpenoid saponins promote the clearing of mucus from the bronchial tubes.

The information presented here by 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.