



Licorice

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Definition: Derived from the root of the licorice plant, licorice is used extensively in Chinese herbal medicine for a variety of medical conditions. It is used most commonly to treat ailments of the gastrointestinal tract. Human studies have shown positive results using Deglycyrrhizinated Licorice (DGL) extract in the treatment of peptic ulcers. Also licorice in combination with other herbs (P-SPECS) has shown favorable results as an adjunctive therapy for prostate cancer, however more research is needed.

Marketing claims: Licorice's use is promoted for the following problems: bronchitis, chest congestion, constipation, hepatitis, inflammation, menopausal symptoms, microbial infections, peptic ulcers, primary adrenocortical insufficiency, and prostate cancer.

Food Sources: tea, extract, chewable tablet and pill form

Dosing Information: Dried root: 1-5 gm three times a day, tea: 2-5 gm steeped for 5 minutes in hot water taken three times a day after meals, DGL extract 0.4-1.6 gm three times a day, DGL in chewable tablet form: 300-400 mg three times a day before meals.

Safety: Due to the adverse effects of licorice, researchers have used Deglycyrrhizinated Licorice (DGL) extract because this form has no reported side effects. Licorice should not be consumed by people who have renal or liver dysfunction or women who are pregnant or breastfeeding. Hypertension, lethargy, muscle pain, cardiac arrhythmias, sodium retention, hypokalemia, hypermineralcorticoidism, pseudo-hyperaldosteronism, and suppression of scalp sebum secretion have been noted. Licorice may cause toxicity of cardiac glycosides. Licorice may cause the loss of potassium in chronic laxative users, and may interfere with sodium and potassium uptake in those taking Spirolactone. Licorice may help to reduce ulcer formation from aspirin overuse. Licorice may also potentiate activity of anticoagulant and MAO-I medications.

Sources:

1. Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center: About herbs, botanicals and other products. www.mskcc.org accessed 2/24/05.
2. Varo Tyler, The Honest Herbal. New York, New York. Haworth Press. 1993
3. University of Maryland Medical Center: Licorice and dosing. www.umm.edu/altmed/constituents/licoricech.html