

Herbs for the Treatment of Allergies

Albizia

Albizia lebbek bark is traditionally used in Ayurveda for asthma, eczema, diseases of the nasal passages, bronchitis, itching, paralysis, gum inflammation and worm infestation.¹⁻⁴ It is used as a tonic and restorative,⁵ and is considered anti-inflammatory.⁶

Albizia bark has demonstrated antiallergic and antianaphylactic activity *in vivo* (from oral administration). Albizia inhibited the sensitisation process and reduced the synthesis of allergy-inducing antibodies.^{4,7,8}

In an uncontrolled trial, the clinical response to Albizia was excellent for patients with asthma of recent onset (less than 2 years). An increase in plasma cortisol was also observed.⁹

A beneficial result was obtained for treatment of allergic conjunctivitis using Albizia in a trial of randomised, controlled design. Signs and symptoms were relieved quickly for those receiving eye drops containing the corticosteroid dexamethasone, but relapse was 100%. In contrast, patients receiving Albizia experienced delayed but sustained benefit.¹⁰ Patients receiving eye drops and capsules (by oral route), both made from Albizia bark concentrate,¹¹ experienced relief of clinical symptoms and a relapse rate of 25%. The relapse rate in the group using Albizia eye drops alone was 60%. In each group the treatment period was 60 days, follow-up occurred 90 days later. The relapse rate was defined by the reappearance of eosinophils in conjunctival smear. The results suggest that internal use of Albizia provided systemic antiallergic activity leading to the documented prolonged recovery.¹⁰

Baical Skullcap

Scutellaria baicalensis root has the following properties in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM): *damp-heat* clearing, *heat* purgative, detoxicant and anti-inflammatory.¹² It is often included in traditional Oriental formulas for antiallergic and anti-inflammatory purposes, for example for the treatment of asthma and allergic dermatitis.^{13,14}

Baical Skullcap contains a number of flavone derivatives including baicalin, wogonin and baicalein.¹⁵ Antiallergic

activity has been demonstrated for oral administration of baicalin (50–100 mg/kg) and baicalein *in vivo*.¹² Baicalein (200 mg/kg, oral) produced a maximum inhibition of 26% at 8 hours in a type II immediate hypersensitivity model (reversed cutaneous anaphylaxis).¹⁶ *In vitro* studies suggest that the flavonoids of Baical Skullcap may block the common pathway for the release of histamine and leukotriene B₄ (LTB₄). (The release of histamine and LTB₄ from mast cells is involved in the pathogenesis of acute allergic reactions and inflammatory responses.)¹⁷

Mild anti-inflammatory activity was demonstrated in several models after oral doses of Baical Skullcap extract (500 mg/kg), baicalin or baicalein (50–100 mg/kg). The typical increases in vascular permeability and acute oedema were inhibited.¹⁸ Baicalein (20 mg/kg, oral) reduced the inflammatory symptoms of induced colitis in mice.¹⁹

Feverfew

Tanacetum parthenium herb contains a characteristic sesquiterpene lactone known as parthenolide, which contains the α -methylene- γ -lactone group. Other constituents include flavonoids and monoterpenes.²⁰ A variety of constituents are regarded as important for the activity of Feverfew.²¹ Purchase of good quality reliable standardised Feverfew products is important to ensure therapeutic benefit. In 2002 an assay of selected US products found large variations in the parthenolide content.²²

From medieval times Feverfew was regarded as a febrifuge. More recent traditional uses include headache, common cold, coughs, difficult breathing, to stimulate digestion and to relieve facial and ear pain in dyspeptic and rheumatic patients.²³⁻²⁶

Anecdotal reports in the early 1980s indicated that Feverfew was beneficial for migraine, and in a smaller number of cases, arthritis, psoriasis, eczema and hayfever.^{21,27,28} Clinical trials, although not conclusive, verify that Feverfew may reduce the severity of migraines.²¹ In one rheumatoid arthritis trial, grip strength was increased in Feverfew patients compared to baseline and placebo group.²⁹

Anti-inflammatory activity was demonstrated by oral administration of Feverfew in rats (carrageenan-induced paw oedema).³⁰ Feverfew extract inhibited granule secretion from platelets and polymorphonuclear leukocytes *in vitro*,³¹ and inhibited prostaglandin production *in vitro*.³²

Parthenolide inhibited the inflammatory mediator NF-kappaB *in vitro* and *in vivo* by injection).^{33,34} The ability of parthenolide to suppress interleukin-4 (IL-4) protein levels in activated T cells *in vitro* suggests it may be useful to treat IL-4-mediated allergic inflammation.³⁵

Synergistic Formulation

These herbs would complement each other in a very potent formulation with antiallergic and anti-inflammatory action.

Indications

- Allergic conditions including hayfever, allergic rhinitis, allergic dermatitis.
- Migraine or headaches associated with allergies or food sensitivities.

Cautions and Contraindications

Contraindicated in those with a known hypersensitivity to feverfew, parthenolide or other members of the Compositae family.

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