

Herbs for the Treatment of Constipation

Dill

The carminative action of *Anethum graveolens* seed (actually the fruit) is due to its essential oil. Dill seed eases flatulence and colic and prevents abdominal pain that may be caused by stimulating laxatives such as Cascara. Dill seed has also been used to treat disordered digestion. Dill seed oil, usually in the form of Dill water, is especially used for flatulence in infants.¹⁻⁴

Cascara

Rhamnus purshiana is a laxative when taken in moderate doses and its distinct bitter quality has a stimulating action on digestive function. Cascara contains anthraquinone glycosides which provide the laxative action. It increases peristalsis and tones over-relaxed muscles of the digestive system and is indicated in chronic, atonic constipation.^{1,5}

Yellow Dock

Rumex crispus is a gentle laxative which also increases the secretion of bile. It also contains anthraquinones. Yellow Dock is indicated for bowel sluggishness and its cholagogue action also improves digestive function. As a depurative Yellow Dock is also well suited to assist with chronic skin conditions where there is a suggestion that liver and bowel dysfunction is implicated.¹

Dandelion Root

Taraxacum officinale root is also a bitter tonic, and contains bitter tasting sesquiterpene lactones. Dandelion Root increases the secretion of bile which is a natural laxative and is also indicated for a wide range of biliary and hepatic conditions, including cholelithiasis (gall stones) and jaundice. It is widely regarded as the supreme liver tonic. Dandelion Root also has gentle laxative properties.^{1,5}

Chamomile

Matricaria recutita contains an essential oil and flavonoids and has spasmolytic, anti-inflammatory and carminative activity. Chamomile has been used to treat flatulent colic with abdominal distension and is used in combination with

laxatives to reduce the incidence of abdominal pain which may be caused by stimulating laxatives.^{1,6}

Synergistic Formulation

These herbs would complement each other in a very potent formulation with laxative, cholagogue, depurative and carminative activity resulting in a cleansing effect on the bowel and promoting elimination of wastes from the body.

Indications

- Chronic atonic constipation, especially involving dyspepsia and poor liver function.
- Conditions in which a soft stool is desirable, such as haemorrhoids.
- Health problems exacerbated by constipation including chronic skin diseases (such as boils and acne), headaches, period pain and chronic catarrh.

Cautions and Contraindications

Use with caution during pregnancy and lactation. Do not use when abdominal pain, nausea or vomiting are present, or if diarrhoea develops. Laxative remedies should not be regarded as a long-term solution to digestive problems. Prolonged use or excessive dosage is undesirable.

REFERENCES

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