

Patient Fact Sheet

BURDOCK

BURDOCK (*Arctium lappa*) is a flowering plant native to Europe and Asia. It is also grown in North America. The herbal medicine comes from the roots of the plant. It is available as a tincture (in alcohol) and as dried root for making tea. It is also eaten as a fresh vegetable in Japan.

WHAT IS IT USED FOR?

- ◆ Some herbalists recommend burdock to treat cancer, liver problems, premenstrual syndrome, urinary tract infections, kidney stones, and HIV.
- ◆ It is used externally for eczema, seborrhea and poorly healing wounds.
- ◆ It is also an ingredient in two alternative cancer remedies, Essiac and the Hoxsey formula.

WHAT HAVE STUDIES SHOWN?

There have been no studies of burdock's effects in humans.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS?

Side effects are rare, but may include:

- ◆ Allergic reaction, including itching or hives
- ◆ Rash from skin contact
- ◆ High or low blood sugar.

No long-term problems have been found from burdock.

Burdock products may be contaminated with belladonna, a similar-looking but poisonous plant. Symptoms of belladonna poisoning include dry mouth and fast heartbeat.

IS IT SAFE FOR CHILDREN AND PREGNANT WOMEN?

Burdock is not recommended for children less than two years old, or for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding. There are no scientific studies evaluating its safety in these situations.

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WILL IT INTERFERE WITH MY OTHER MEDICATIONS OR MY MEDICAL CONDITION?

- ◆ Burdock can cause both high and low blood sugar in mice, so diabetic patients should be careful and monitor their blood sugar carefully when taking burdock.
- ◆ Tinctures are not recommended for people with severe liver disease, because they contain alcohol.
- ◆ There have been no studies of burdock's interactions with medications.

WHAT ARE TYPICAL DOSAGES?

- ◆ A typical dose for adults is two to six grams of dried root daily, or one teaspoon of dried root boiled in three cups water for thirty minutes, then taken as tea, one cup three times per day.
- ◆ Dosages for children are unknown.
- ◆ Follow your health care provider's instructions.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

- ◆ Always tell your doctor or nurse practitioner if you are taking any herb, and before starting any new herb. Your health care provider needs to know everything you are taking to help you make decisions about your health care. Herbs can cause problems with other herbs, dietary supplements, or medications.
- ◆ Herbal products may contain chemicals or other species of plants. This is especially a concern with burdock because it is grown in developing countries.