

The Longwood Herbal Task Force
(<http://www.mcp.edu/herbal/default.htm>) and
The Center for Holistic Pediatric Education and Research
(<http://www.childrenshospital.org/holistic/>)

Clinician Information Summary

CALENDULA

(*Calendula officinalis*)

SUMMARY

Calendula has been used at least since the time of the Greeks as a skin balm and anti-inflammatory. Despite the lack of scientifically controlled trials evaluating the effectiveness of calendula, topically applied products containing its extracts are commonly available. Data are insufficient to recommend calendula for internal use as a uterine tonic, antimicrobial or cancer remedy or as a treatment for conjunctivitis. Topical preparations appear to be very safe. Data are insufficient regarding safety of use during pregnancy, lactation or childhood or by persons taking sedative medications.

POPULAR USES: Skin conditions including minor abrasions and burns, conjunctivitis, aphthous stomatitis, pharyngitis, hemorrhoids, diaper rashes; uterine stimulant to induce menstruation (emmenagogue); ulcers.

CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS: The flowers contain sesquiterpene and flavonoid glycosides, triterpenoid saponins, sterols, fatty acids, carotenoids and other compounds.

SCIENTIFIC DATA

In vitro: Calendula extracts display uterotonic activity in isolated animal uteri. Data on antimicrobial effects are conflicting, but tend not to support use of calendula as an antimicrobial agent.

In animals: Calendula exerts sedative effects and synergistic effects with barbiturates in animal models. In two Polish studies from the 1960's, calendula exerted some estrogenic effects in

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ovariectomized mice. Calendula demonstrated moderate anti-inflammatory activity in several animal studies. Calendula extracts had antitumor effects in two studies in mice.

In humans: Anecdotal reports and case series claim herbal mixtures including calendula can help heal gastric and duodenal ulcers and exert anti-inflammatory and wound healing effects. There are no controlled trials evaluating calendula's use as a sedative, antimicrobial, estrogenic agent, uterine tonic, anti-tumor agent or vulnerary.

TOXICITY AND SIDE EFFECTS:

Side effects: Allergic reactions are extremely rare. No other toxicity reported.

Interactions with other medications: Animal studies suggest potential interaction with sedative medications if calendula is consumed by mouth.

Contraindications: None known

Pregnancy and lactation: No clinical studies.

Pediatric use: No clinical studies or systematic surveillance.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- HOME: <http://www.mcp.edu/herbal/default.htm>
- Calendula Complete Monograph: <http://www.mcp.edu/herbal/calendula/calendula.pdf>
- Calendula Patient Fact Sheet: <http://www.mcp.edu/herbal/calendula/calendula.ph.pdf>
- Review on OnHealth.com: <http://onhealth.com/alternative/resource/herbs/item,15960.asp>