

Patient Fact Sheet

FEVERFEW

FEVERFEW (*Tanacetum parthenium*) is a flowering plant from the same family as chamomile and daisies. Herbal medicines are made from the leaves, and sometimes from the flowers. The dried, powdered leaves are available in capsules and alcohol tinctures, and some people also chew the fresh leaves. Feverfew's main active ingredient is called parthenolide.

WHAT IS IT USED FOR?

- ◆ Feverfew is mostly used to prevent migraine headaches.
- ◆ Some herbalists also recommend it to treat rheumatoid arthritis, menstrual cramps, asthma, skin rashes, and fever.

WHAT HAVE STUDIES SHOWN?

- ◆ Feverfew can prevent **migraine headaches** in some people who are prone to them.
- ◆ There has only been one study of feverfew's use for **rheumatoid arthritis**, and it did not appear to help.
- ◆ There are no human studies of feverfew for **menstrual cramps, asthma, skin rashes, or fever**.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS?

- ◆ Chewing fresh feverfew leaves can cause mouth sores and swollen lips or a swollen tongue.
- ◆ Allergic reactions, including itching and hives, are possible. Allergy to feverfew may be more common in people who are allergic to ragweed, which is in the same plant family.
- ◆ Other possible side effects are upset stomach, fast heartbeat, sleep problems and rashes, but these side effects are rare.

No long-term problems have been found from taking feverfew.

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

- ◆ Because feverfew may keep blood from clotting, people who take aspirin or other medications that prevent blood clots, or who expect to have surgery, should ask their health

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care provider if it is safe for them to take feverfew.

IS IT SAFE FOR CHILDREN AND PREGNANT WOMEN?

Some herbalists believe that feverfew can cause contractions in pregnant women, but there are no studies showing this. Herbalists usually do not recommend feverfew for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, or for children under two years old.

WHAT ARE TYPICAL DOSAGES?

- ◆ A typical adult dose of the dried, powdered leaves is 60 to 125 mg two times per day by mouth, or 2 or 3 fresh leaves daily.
- ◆ Doses for children are unknown.
- ◆ Extracts of feverfew do not work as well as the dried, powdered leaves or fresh leaves.
- ◆ Standardized products are available. They are guaranteed to contain a certain amount of active ingredients. Usually these products contain at least 0.2% parthenolide.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

- ◆ It usually takes several weeks of feverfew use before it is effective in preventing migraines.
- ◆ Headaches may reoccur when feverfew is stopped.
- ◆ Always tell your doctor or nurse practitioner if you are taking any herbal product, and before starting any new one. Your health care provider needs to know everything you are taking to help you make decisions about your health care. Some herbs can cause problems with other herbs, dietary supplements, or medications.

SEE ALSO:

Complete Monograph: <http://www.mcp.edu/herbal/feverfew/feverfew.pdf>

Clinician Information Summary: <http://www.mcp.edu/herbal/feverfew/feverfew.cis.pdf>