

The Longwood Herbal Task Force and
The Center for Holistic Pediatric Education and Research

Patient Fact Sheet

SORREL

SORREL (*Rumex acetosa*) is a leafy green plant, sometimes eaten in soups or salads. It has a bitter flavor. The herbal medicine comes from the stems and leaves of the plant. It is available in tablets and as a tincture (in alcohol).

WHAT IS IT USED FOR?

- ◆ Some herbalists recommend sorrel as a diuretic (to decrease fluid in the body), and for infections and diarrhea.
- ◆ It is one of the main ingredients in the alternative cancer remedy, Essiac.

WHAT HAVE STUDIES SHOWN?

- ◆ There have been no scientific studies of sorrel's effects in humans.
- ◆ In laboratory studies, it did not kill bacteria or viruses, and in mice it had no effect against cancer.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS?

Side effects may include:

- ◆ Allergic reaction, including itching or hives
- ◆ Upset stomach
- ◆ Kidney stones
- ◆ Kidney and liver damage
- ◆ Decreased absorption of calcium and iron in the diet.

Deaths have been reported in animals from eating too much sorrel.

IS IT SAFE FOR CHILDREN AND PREGNANT WOMEN?

Sorrel is not usually used during pregnancy. There are no scientific studies of its safety for children or women who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

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

- ◆ Sorrel is not recommended for people who have had kidney stones.
- ◆ It can interfere with the absorption of calcium and iron supplements, so it should not be taken at the same time as these supplements.
- ◆ Tinctures are not recommended for people with severe liver disease because they contain alcohol.

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WHAT ARE TYPICAL DOSAGES?

- ◆ Typical adult doses are 2 coated tablets or 50 drops of alcohol tincture daily.
- ◆ Doses 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.
- ◆ Herbal products may be contaminated with chemicals or other species of plants.