

Dong Quai (*Angelica sinensis*)

Common Names: Tang-kuei, Chinese angelicaroot.

Location: This herb can be found naturally growing in China and Japan.

Description: The root of this herb when dried is used medicinally.

Uses: Use dong quai to help treat premenstrual syndrome (PMS), atherosclerosis, high blood pressure, heart attack, infertility, eye disorders, leukemia, menopause related problems, migraine, ovarian cysts, vertigo and psoriasis.

Doses: This herb is available in almost every form imaginable.

Warnings: Do not use this herb while pregnant or taking prescription blood-thinners. Some sensitivity to the sun may result from the use of this herb.

Perhaps the most talked about member of the *Angelica* species is the Chinese variety commonly known as Dong Quai. There has been a great deal of research done on Dong Quai (*Angelica sinensis*) and its various effects on the body and the female reproductive system. Dong Quai has two very different effects on the uterus, it has the ability to stimulate contractions and also to relax the uterus thus inhibiting contractions. **Which effect you get depends on how you prepare the herb.**

Dong Quai's relaxing effect on the uterus comes from the volatile oils contained in the root. Volatile means that the oils are easily destroyed. When the desire is to capture them, brew a medicinal tea or [infusion](#). "Studies indicate that dang gui hot water extract regulates uterine and intestine contractions, relaxes the uterus and even inhibits spasms."¹ The relaxing effect of Dong Quai is useful for [dysmenorrhea](#) (painful menstruation).

When the desire is to stimulate strong, coordinated, regular contractions, for aiding in childbirth, stimulating delayed menstruation, and causing miscarriage/abortion, then a [decoction](#), [tincture](#) or capsules are used. In these preparations the volatile oils are destroyed or not captured in the process; the simmering of the herb while making a decoction destroys the oils, leaving just the uterine stimulating properties, in a tincture the oils are not extracted into the alcohol, and capsules also seem to have the uterine stimulating properties as well, it is possible that the volatile oils are damaged or destroyed when grinding the root into powder for placement within the capsule.

When contractions are fast, irregular and weak, the non-volatile components of Dong Quai root causes them to become slow, regular and stronger. One of my sources claims that a decoction is the best, where another source claims that a tincture causes stronger more coordinated contractions. The capsules seem to work as well (be sure to use a high quality product), and one advantage with capsules the dosage is most easily monitored.

A couple of ladies who have been kind enough to share with us their experience of ending pregnancy in [Sharing our Wisdom](#) switched to Dong Quai after using the vitamin C. [Trumary](#) who's pregnancy had been confirmed with a pregnancy test, started taking vitamin C when menstruation was two weeks late. She took the

vitamin c for 5 days then switched to Black Cohosh and a day later added a tincture of Dong Quai. After medicating day and night for about 7 days bleeding began 12 hours after she took her first dose of Dong Quai.

[Annie](#) used Dong Quai exclusively, first as a [decoction](#), then switched to capsules. She had a positive pregnancy test, bleeding began in 5 Days. [Brynna](#) didn't have a pregnancy test, but had unprotected intercourse during the peak of her fertility. She took vitamin c for 10 days before menstruation was due. Stopped, taking nothing for the next six days. Menstruation now 1 week late, she started taking Dong Quai, 1000 mg for her first dose then reduced to 800 mg every 4 hours. After the first dose (1000 mg) - cramps; after the 2nd dose (800 mg) - spotting; after the 4th dose - bleeding like a regular period. [Autumn](#) used the vitamin C for 3 days and then switched to Dong Quai (2 capsules every 4 hours) and had bleeding begin with in 10 hours of starting the Dong Quai. Autumn's pregnancy was not confirmed, she says she observed fibrous tissue with chorionic villi. Bleeding began in 3 1/2 - 4 days.

Other women using Dong Quai have reported noticing a reductions in pregnancy symptoms, especially with breast symptoms, such as swelling, tenderness and pain.

- **Note:** I would like to add, that I put the details from these ladies experiences here for informational purposes, not as guidelines for what you could or should do. Every woman is different, and it is important to take that into consideration as you are coming up with your plan of how to deal with your current situation, doses etc. Just because it worked this way for these ladies doesn't mean it will happen this way for you.

Who shouldn't use this herb:

Contradictions - Do Not use Angelica or Dong Quai if:

- Women who bleed heavily during a normal menstrual period or who's blood does not clot easily should avoid using Angelica species, including Dong Quai. If you take blood thinning agents like aspirin or other pharmaceuticals, using Dong Quai maybe dangerous, clotting may be impaired and hemorrhage may result.
- If you are experiencing abdominal congestion and bloating, you should avoid using Dong Quai.
- If you have endometriosis or fibroids, you should avoid Angelica and Dong Quai.
- Women who are pregnant and wish to remain so should avoid using Dong Quai or other Angelica species.
- I also found a website cautioning people who have diabetes to avoid dong quai because it can elevate blood sugar levels. I'm not sure if this is true, as I have not

see this caution elsewhere, and some of the claims made on the website I question the validity of - so investigate further if you are diabetic.

- People with a history of cancer or who have had or are at risk for a heart attack. People who use blood thinning medications, or if your blood has difficulty clotting. If you are 6 weeks or more pregnant.
- It can cause an increase in sugar in the urine.²

Possible Side Effects The one I'm most concerned with is the tendency to increase bleeding. For women who normally have heavy menstrual periods Dong Quai and Angelica can make bleeding even heavier. This raises concern when this herb is used to end pregnancy as it can increase the risk for hemorrhage. If you decide to use this herb, pay attention to how much you are bleeding. When ending pregnancy it is normal for bleeding to be heavier than a normal menstrual period, and for it to be more crampy, and clottier than normal. But profuse bleeding is not part of herbal abortion, it is the sign of a problem. If you need to seek medical help, tell them you think you are miscarrying, and they will take care of it from there. To decrease the risk of hemorrhage, discontinue use of Dong Quai or Angelica once bleeding has been established. Other noted side effects for Angelica include, peeing a lot, irritation, allergic reaction.

- Symptoms of toxicity have been reported when dosage is too high. These are usually headaches and dizziness, sometimes strong cramping. If you experience any of these, discontinue the dong quai, and or resume at a lower dosage that your body tolerates better. The idea is not to poison yourself, just to make conditions unsuitable for a fertilized egg.

Dong Quai Root and Powder Profile

Also known as

Angelica sinensis, Dong Gui, Chinese Angelica, and Dan Gui.

Introduction

The Chinese phrase "dong quai" literally means "state of return." There is a Chinese folk tale too old to be ascribed to any one author that states that an angel appeared to a monk in a dream and told him to use dong quai to cure the plague that was ravaging the country at the time by making it into a tea. For over two thousand years, since the writing of the Divine Husbandman's Classic of the Materia Medica, Chinese herbal medicine has used dong quai to help women return to their natural hormonal and emotional states after the accumulation of toxins and emotional injuries in the energy organ known as the "liver." It is thought to strengthen the immune system by increasing the production of white blood

cells, assisting the liver in riding the body of toxins. Dong quai is a plant in the same family as celery, parsley, and carrots. Its long, large, most, oily and fragrant root has a yellow-brown bark and a yellow-white cross section. Greenish roots should not be used.

Constituents

Butylidene phthalide, ligustilide, n-butylidene-phthalide, sesquiterpenes, carvacrol, dihydropthalic anhydride, sucrose, B vitamins, beta-sitosterol.

Parts Used

Root.

Typical Preparations

Teas, tinctures, encapsulations, usually with other herbs. With white peony, rehmannia and ligusticum, used for menstrual irregularity, amenorrhea, and dysmenorrhea. With ginger, for post partum abdominal pain, or hernia. With cinnamon for pelvic infections. With honeysuckle (lonicera) for swelling of skin abscesses.

Summary

In herbal medicine, the primary use of dong quai is as a uterine tonic, reducing menstrual pain and reducing disagreeable symptoms of menopause. Dong quai does not stimulate the production of estrogen. The herb is used in tonics for both sexes to relieve pain caused by neuralgia, poor circulation, and arthritis.

Precautions

Avoid when there is diarrhea with flatulence. Not to be used while pregnant, breast feeding, or if you are on blood thinning medications.