

Gymnema Herb Profile

Also known as

Gymnema sylvestris Gurmar, and Destroyer of Sugar.

Introduction

Gymnema comes to us from mainland India and several parts of Africa and has a deep history rooted in Ayurvedic medicine. Indian folklore says that Ganesha had Madhumeha, the Indian word for diabetes, as was evidenced by his purported predisposition to eating heavy and sweet foods. Diabetes has been known by the people of India for thousands of years. Currently Gymnema is one of the major botanicals being administered for those suffering from diabetes, in boosting insulin levels and controlling healthy blood sugar levels. Because Gymnema has a molecular structure similar to sugar, it blocks and inhibits a large percentage of sugar absorption and has the incredible ability of severing one's desire for sugar. This is why it is known as the "Destroyer of Sugar" in Indian culture. This probably explains its widespread use from Mothers wishing to tame their children's sweet tooth.

Constituents

Gymnemic acid, Parabin, Glucose, and Carbohydrates.

Parts Used

The leaf taken orally. The best preparations have been those from whole leaf tea, but many liquid extracts and capsules work comparably well.

Typical Preparations

Tea infusion from the leaf, either cut or whole, or taken orally in capsule or extract form. (Not to exceed 400 mg daily)

Summary

Avid and thorough Indian research is working hard to quantify and validate the sugar balancing properties of Gymnema. Studies in India as far back as the 1930's have shown that the leaves cause hypoglycemia in animals that were tested: the assumption being that it stimulates the insulin secretion in the pancreas. It is their belief that these findings will further prove the effectiveness of Gymnema in controlling blood sugar. Because of its ease in use, and promising results it is widely used and popularly accepted as a safe and effective treatment in diabetes. However it should be noted that those currently on insulin or hypoglycemic drugs will have to monitor their levels more closely.

Precautions

Gymnema has been shown to enhance the blood glucose lowering effects of insulin and hypoglycemic drugs. Blood glucose levels should be monitored closely.