

## Use of Herbal Products in Cystic Fibrosis

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### Introduction

#### Cystic Fibrosis

CF is a chronic disease that you inherit. It mainly affects the lungs and digestion. CF affects people in varied ways. The basic problem in CF is an error in the salt and water exchange in some cells. This causes the body to make thick, sticky mucus. The mucus clogs the lungs and pancreas.

#### Integrated Medicine

There is a growing trend for people with chronic conditions to use both integrated and conventional medicine. Many people with CF have done this. Integrated medicine can include massage therapy, chiropractic care, acupuncture, herbal medicine, naturopathy, homeopathy, and diet supplements. This handout focuses on herbal medicine, which is also called phytomedicine or botanical medicine.

#### Disclaimer

The general information on this educational tool is a limited review of a limited sampling of herbal products. It is not a recommendation for herbal use from CF healthcare providers. This handout is designed to help people learn about the types of herbal products, the risks to and safeguards for people with CF, and where to learn more.

This tool should not be used in place of medical advice. Please note, reliable research on herbal products is limited, and research is based on the general population rather than specific to the CF population. Chinese herbs have been left out because they often contain unlisted ingredients which may affect health.

Family members or friends may suggest herbal products and treatments to you or your child with CF. Always learn about herbal products before using them or giving them to a child. Always tell your CF healthcare provider if you are thinking about taking herbal products or giving them to a child. Transplant, immuno-suppressed or pregnant individuals should consult their CF healthcare provider prior to using any herbal products.

#### Safety

This handout does not contain a full list of herbal products. Herbal products come from plants. These plant products can act as drugs. Some herbal products contain many active ingredients. Ingredients in herbal products can interact with prescription drugs, over-the-counter drugs, and nutrition supplements. Herbal products do not require the same Food and Drug (FDA) approval as prescription drugs or drugs in the CF pipeline. Some herbal product claims can mislead.

### Herbal Products

#### BETONY

Marketing Claims	Reported Benefits/Efficacy	Safety/Risks
Treats diarrhea	Mixed results	Intake above manufacturer’s recommended doses may irritate the stomach.

#### National Office

6931 Arlington Road Bethesda, Maryland 20814  
(301) 951-4422 (800) FIGHT CF www.cff.org

## CURCUMIN (Turmeric)

Marketing Claims	Reported Benefits/Efficacy	Safety/Risks
Decreases inflammation, heartburn and upset stomach	Mixed results, ongoing studies	May increase bleeding when used with anticoagulant drugs including warfarin, clopidogrel and aspirin. May lower blood sugar when used with diabetes drugs. Doses above manufacturer's recommended dosage or long-term use may lead to stomach ulcers
Antioxidant effects	Little research, some support	

## ECHINACEA

Marketing Claims	Reported Benefits/Efficacy	Safety/Risks
Boosts the immune system in healthy people	Claim not supported	Risk of allergic reaction for people allergic to plants in the daisy family including ragweed. People with autoimmune disorders should not use echinacea.
Prevents the common cold in children	Mixed results, ongoing studies	
Treats upper respiratory infections	Claim not supported	

## EUCALYPTUS LEAVES

Marketing Claims	Reported Benefits/Efficacy	Safety/Risks
Expectorant (when composed of 70 - 85% cineole/eucalyptol). Often given as tea-1/2 tsp Eucalyptus leaves/5 ounces water.	Little research, more research needed	Do not give eucalyptus to young children.

## GINGER

Marketing Claims	Reported Benefits/Efficacy	Safety/Risks
Treats nausea & vomiting	Supported claim	May increase risk of bleeding when used with anticoagulant drugs including warfarin, clopidogrel, and aspirin. May lower blood sugar when on diabetes drugs. May cause drowsiness.
Treats motion sickness	Mixed results, ongoing studies	

## HOREHOUND

Marketing Claims	Reported Benefits/Efficacy	Safety/Risks
Good-tasting expectorant, cough suppressant	Little research, some support	Intake above manufacturer's recommended dose may lead to heart problems. Do not use while pregnant.
Boosts appetite	Little research, some support	

## LICORICE ROOT (Glycyrrhiza)

Marketing Claims	Reported Benefits/Efficacy	Safety/Risks
Treats stomach problems, nausea, stomach ulcers, & inflammation	Mixed results, ongoing studies	Intake above manufacturer's recommended dose may cause salt & water retention, & low potassium. Do not use if on diuretics. May increase side effects from steroids & MAOIs.
Expectorant	Mixed results, more research needed	
Lowers heart disease risk	Little research, mixed results	

## MILK THISTLE

Marketing Claims	Reported Benefits/Efficacy	Safety/Risks
Improves liver function	Mixed results, ongoing studies	May slow the breakdown of other drugs and nutrients. Do not use while pregnant.

## ROSE HIPS

Marketing Claims	Reported Benefits/Efficacy	Safety/Risks
High Vitamin C content	Supported claim	Various levels of Vitamin C in products. Does not work better than manufactured Vitamin C.

## SLIPPERY ELM

Marketing Claims	Reported Benefits/Efficacy	Safety/Risks
Expectorant	No research yet	Risk of allergic reaction for people allergic to plants in the Elm tree family. May slow absorption of drugs.
Sooths cough	No research yet	

## THYME

Marketing Claims	Reported Benefits/Efficacy	Safety/Risks
Expectorant	Little research, some support	Safe. Often given as Tea - 1 tsp thyme/8 ounces water.
Treats bronchitis	Little research, mixed results	

## Resources

### To learn more about herbal products:

Quackwatch  
<http://www.quackwatch.org>

### Government Websites

National Center for Complementary & Alternative Medicine  
<http://nccam.nih.gov>  
<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/herbsataglance.htm>

Natural Standard  
<http://www.naturalstandard.com>

National Institutes of Health  
<http://dietary-supplements.info.nih.gov/>  
<http://medlineplus.gov>

### Literature

The Health Professional's Guide to Popular Dietary Supplements: 3rd Ed. by Allison Fragakais & Cynthia Thomson, (2007). Published by The American Dietetic Association.

### Other Websites

Boston-Longwood Herbal Task Force  
<http://www.longwoodherbal.org>

Herbs of Choice by Varro Tyler, (1994). Published by The Haworth Herbal Press.

Columbia University  
<http://www.rosenthal.hs.columbia.edu/Botanicals.html>

The Honest Herbal by Varro Tyler, (1993). Published by The Haworth Herbal Press.