

Feverfew : *Tanacetum parthenium*

The main active ingredient in the herb feverfew is parthenolide, a phytochemical that provides feverfew its anti-inflammatory properties. The herb also believed to soothe the blood vessels in the head, and prevent blood vessel spasms which may contribute to headaches and other resulting problems. The feverfew plant is rich in sesquiterpene lactones, the principal one being parthenolide. Other constituents include essential oils, flavonoid glycosides, pinene derivatives and cistic acid. Feverfew should be taken regularly to receive maximum protection and benefit. Feverfew also contains niacin and iron, and provides nutrition to the central nervous system.

Dosage

Adults (18 years and older) 2 to 3 dried leaves (approximately 60 milligrams) have been taken daily, or 50 to 250 milligrams of a dried leaf preparation taken daily, standardized to 0.2% parthenolide (a common dose is 125 milligrams daily). Human studies have used 50 to 114 milligrams of feverfew powdered leaves daily, packed into capsules, standardized to 0.2% parthenolide, or 0.50 milligrams of parthenolide daily. Doses of 70 to 86 milligrams of dried chopped feverfew leaves in capsules, taken once daily, have been also used.



Children/ Pregnancy

There is not enough scientific information for pediatric or pregnancy recommendation.

Allergies

Feverfew may cause allergy in people allergic to chrysanthemums, daisies, marigolds, or other members of the Compositae family, including ragweed. There are multiple reports of allergic skin rashes after contact with feverfew.

Side Effects and Warnings

Few side effects are reported in human studies of feverfew. The side effects that do occur are usually mild and reversible. Mouth inflammation or ulcers, including swelling of the lips, tongue irritation, bleeding of the gums, and loss of taste have been reported, which usually occur after direct contact of the mouth with the leaves, although some people report burning after swallowing a capsule containing dried leaf.

Photosensitivity (sensitivity to sunlight or sunlamps) has been reported with other herbs in the Composite plant family, and may be possible with feverfew as well. Indigestion, nausea, flatulence, constipation, diarrhea, abdominal bloating, and heartburn have been reported rarely in human studies. Gardeners may develop skin irritation at sites of contact with feverfew plants. Feverfew can also cause allergic rashes. One small study reported increased heart rate in some patients. Long-term feverfew users who stop treatment suddenly may experience feverfew withdrawal symptoms, including rebound headaches, anxiety, difficulty sleeping, muscle stiffness, and joint pain.

Laboratory tests suggest that feverfew affects blood platelets, and in theory may increase the risk of bleeding. However, this has not been clearly shown in humans. Nonetheless, caution is advised in patients with bleeding disorders or taking drugs that may increase the risk of bleeding. Dosing adjustments may be necessary. Use caution prior to some surgeries or dental procedures, due to a theoretical increase in bleeding risk.

Interactions with Drugs

Based on laboratory research, feverfew theoretically may increase the risk of bleeding when taken with drugs that increase the risk of bleeding. However, this has not been clearly shown in humans. Some examples include aspirin, anticoagulants ("blood thinners") such as warfarin (Coumadin®) or heparin, anti-platelet drugs such as clopidogrel (Plavix®), and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®) or naproxen (Naprosyn®, Aleve®).

Sun sensitivity caused by certain drugs like doxycycline or Retin A® may be increased by feverfew. Feverfew may also alter the way that certain drugs are broken down by the liver.