

GYMNEMA

(*Gymnema sylvestre*)

Clinical Summary

Actions

- Hypoglycaemic
- Antidiabetic
- Appetite Suppressant
- Hypolipidemic
- Antimicrobial
- Antibacterial
- Antiviral
- Larvicidal
- Diuretic
- Antiallergic
- Antirheumatic
- Digestive Stimulant
- Laxative

Indications

- Type 1 and 2 diabetes
- Hyperglycaemia
- Insulin resistance
- Polycystic ovary syndrome
- Reduction of sweet cravings and appetite
- Weight loss
- Obesity including when associated with low thyroid function

Traditional Use

Gymnema leaves have been used for more than 2000 years in Ayurvedic medicine in India to treat 'madhu meha' or honey urine (the equivalent of diabetes). Its native Hindi name 'gurmar' means 'sugar destroyer' on account of its ability to abolish the taste of sugar. When applied to the tongue gymnema remarkably anaesthetises the sweet taste buds.

Energetics

Bitter, cooling.

Constituents

A group of oleanane type triterpenoid saponins known as gymnemic acids and dammarenesaponins called gymnemasides, gymnemasaponins, the polypeptide gurmarin, flavonol glycosides and phenolic compounds as well as a range of nutrients including ascorbic acid, beta-carotene, chromium, iron, magnesium and potassium.

Use in Pregnancy

There is insufficient reliable information available about the safety of gymnema in pregnancy.

Contraindications and Cautions

None known.

Drug Interactions

Use cautiously in diabetic patients using antidiabetic and insulin medications due to possible potentiation of effects. Serum glucose levels should be monitored and doses of concomitant hypoglycaemic drugs may require adjustment under the supervision of a healthcare professional. Concomitant use of gymnema with lipid-lowering agents may potentiate their effects. In practice these interactions may be useful as a reduction in the drug dose could theoretically be achieved under professional supervision.

Administration and Dosage

Liquid extract 1:1 in 25% alcohol
10 to 40mL weekly

For sweet cravings and reducing sweet perception:
1 to 2mL dropped onto the tongue and rinsed off
then repeat every two to three hours as required.