

WILD YAM

(*Dioscorea villosa*)

Clinical Summary

Actions

- Hormone Modulator
- Anti-inflammatory
- Antispasmodic
- Antirheumatic
- Bitter

Indications

- Menopausal symptoms
- Menstrual cramping, female infertility, ovarian pain
- Gastrointestinal spasm including diverticulitis, irritable bowel syndrome, inflammatory conditions of the gastrointestinal tract, reduces the inflammation and pain associated with intestinal cramping as part of inflammatory bowel disease, flatulence, diverticulitis, nausea, vomiting
- Rheumatoid arthritis

Traditional Use

For centuries herbalists have been using wild yam to treat menstrual cramps and problems related to childbirth, as well as for upset stomach and coughs. In the 1940s the roots of wild yam were discovered to be an important source of diosgenin, a plant steroidal saponin that scientists can manipulate to produce steroids such as progesterone, oestrogen, cortisone and dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA), which are then used for medical purposes. Diosgenin was used as starting material for the synthesis of a highly potent and orally active progestational agent which was the key ingredient in the first birth control pills in the 1960s.

Energetics

Sweet, neutral.

Constituents

Steroidal saponins (diosgenin), vitamin C, beta-carotene, vitamins B1, B2, B3, iron, magnesium, potassium, selenium, zinc, polyphenols.

Use in Pregnancy

Likely to be safe when consumed in dietary amounts however safety is not known when used in larger quantities.

Contraindications and Cautions

None known.

Drug Interactions

Monitor with oestrogens, for example hormone replacement therapy and oral contraceptives.

Administration and Dosage

Liquid extract 1:1 in 50% alcohol
20 to 80mL weekly