

Bilberry

Vaccinium myrtillus L.

[Fam. *Ericaceae*]

OVERVIEW

Bilberry is the name of a small, European blueberry. The standardized, concentrated extract of bilberry fruit is used by consumers mainly for disorders of the eyes and circulatory system. Sales in the mainstream retail markets ranked 13th of all herbs in 2000. Some concentrated extracts of the berry are standardized for an exact amount of water-soluble substances called anthocyanidins.

USES

Visual problems such as circulatory disorders of the retina; vein and circulatory disorders, including varicose veins, inadequate vein strength, and fragile capillaries.

DOSAGE

Ranges from 160–480 mg daily depending on the conditions being treated. Therapeutic benefits appear to take effect in 4–8 weeks.

FOR DIARRHEA: Non-standardized preparations for no more than 3–4 days.

DRIED, RIPE FRUIT: 20–60 g daily (4–8 g with water, several times daily).

INFUSION/DECOCTION: 20–60 g daily.

COLD MACERATE: 20–60 g daily.

GARGLE: Mouthwash containing 10% decoction.

FLUID EXTRACT: 2–4 ml, 3 times daily [1:1 (*g/ml*)].

DRY STANDARDIZED EXTRACT: 80–160 mg, 3 times daily [25% anthocyanidins].

CONTRAINDICATIONS

None known.

PREGNANCY AND LACTATION: None known.



ADVERSE EFFECTS

Bilberry is not known to cause adverse effects in normally recommended therapeutic doses.

DRUG INTERACTIONS

There are no known drug interactions in therapeutic doses. However, very high doses (more than 170 mg anthocyanins daily for 30–60 days) may interact with anticoagulating drugs such as warfarin (Coumadin, Sofarin). Bilberry reportedly may reduce daily insulin requirements. Patients who are simultaneously taking antidiabetic medications and bilberry may need to be monitored or have the dosage of their antidiabetic drugs adjusted.

Comments

When using a dietary supplement, purchase it from a reliable source. For best results, use the same brand of product throughout the period of use. As with all medications and dietary supplements, please inform your healthcare provider of all herbs and medications you are taking. Interactions may occur between medications and herbs or even among different herbs when taken at the same time. Treat your herbal supplement with care by taking it as directed, storing it as advised on the label, and keeping it out of the reach of children and pets. Consult your healthcare provider with any questions.



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