

Horse Chestnut

Aesculus hippocastanum L.

[Fam. *Hippocastanaceae*]

OVERVIEW

Horse chestnut is relatively new to the U.S. herbal products market. However, it is gaining popularity because of numerous clinical studies showing that it is safe and effective for treating varicose veins, inadequate vein strength, and related disorders.

USES

Venous insufficiency (chronic); varicose veins (legs); symptoms associated with varicose veins such as swollen legs, pain and heaviness in legs, and calf pain; injuries with hematomas (bruises).

DOSAGE

Internal

DRY EXTRACT FROM DRIED SEED (standardized to 16–20% triterpene glycosides): 250–312.5 mg, 2 times daily, equivalent to 100 mg escin daily.

DRY EXTRACT FROM FRESH SEED (standardized): 2 tablets containing 63–90 mg, 3 times daily, equivalent to 120 mg escin daily. After 1–2 weeks reduce to 1 tablet, 3 times daily.

NOTE: Unprocessed horse chestnut seeds should not be eaten or made into tea because they contain toxins, including esculin, which are removed in processing.

External

There are no external horse chestnut preparations available in the U.S. at this time.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

Consult with a healthcare provider before giving oral preparations to children or individuals with chronic kidney failure. The gel or ointment should not be applied to mucous membranes, or broken or ulcerated skin. Consult with a healthcare provider before giving preparations in cases of thrombosis (clots) or risk of embolism.

PREGNANCY AND LACTATION: None known.

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.



ADVERSE EFFECTS

Rare adverse effects can include pruritus (severe itching), nausea, stomach complaints, irritation of the stomach's lining, and reflux. An isolated horse chestnut seed chemical, escin Ib, might partially delay or even inhibit emptying of the stomach. This possible adverse effect can be minimized by taking the extract in an enteric-coated tablet form with the main meal. In one case report, horse chestnut was linked to contact dermatitis (red, itchy skin), but this did not involve oral preparations (e.g., capsules, tablets).

DRUG INTERACTIONS

The effects of anticoagulant (blood-thinning) drugs may be increased by certain components of horse chestnut, specifically escin.



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