

Milk Thistle

Silybum marianum (L.) Gaertn.

[Fam. Asteraceae]

OVERVIEW

Milk thistle preparations have been used in European medicine for over 2,000 years for the treatment of liver diseases. In the U.S. in 2000, milk thistle ranked 11th in sales of all herbal products sold in food, drug, and mass market outlets, reaching about \$9 million in retail sales. With numerous clinical studies involving over 2,400 patients, it is perhaps the best documented therapy available for treating liver intoxication.

USES

Alcoholic liver disease; alcoholic liver cirrhosis; infectious hepatitis; drug-induced hepatitis.

DOSAGE

For chronic conditions, milk thistle must be taken over an extended period for efficacy. For acute conditions that last longer than a week or recur periodically, patients are encouraged to seek a healthcare provider's advice.

DRY EXTRACT (STANDARDIZED): 40–70:1 (*w/w*), 70–80% silymarin, daily equivalent to 200–400 mg of silymarin, calculated as silibinin in divided doses. Many clinical trials have used a daily dose equal to 420 mg of silymarin divided into three doses. The dose of 140 mg should be swallowed with sufficient amounts of fluid.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

No known contraindications.

PREGNANCY AND LACTATION: No known restrictions.

ADVERSE EFFECTS

The standardized preparation has occasionally caused a mild laxative effect.

DRUG INTERACTIONS

None known. Ingesting silymarin at the same time as psychopharmaceutical drugs, butyrophenones, or phenothiazines has produced the benefit of decreased lipid peroxidation damage of the liver.

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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