Sage (Salvia officinalis), a plant belonging to the Lamiaceae (mint) family, has been revered for centuries for its many diverse medicinal applications and culinary uses. Native to southern Europe and the Mediterranean region, the plant has today been naturalized to many other climates, including North America.

Sage contains a variety of volatile oils, flavonoids (including apigenin, diosme- tin, and luteolin), and phenolic acids, including the phenolic acid named after rosemary—rosmarinic acid. It is also an excellent source of vitamin K and a good source of vitamin A (in the form of provitamin A carotenoid phytonutrients).

Therapeutically, sage has long been used both internally and externally in myriad applications. External applications have centered around treating skin conditions such as eczema as well as strains, sprains, ulcers, swelling and bleeding. Internally, sage has been used to treat everything from sore throats and coughs, to canker sores, halitosis, gingivitis, rheumatism, excessive menstrual bleeding, as well as to help diminish milk production when nursing is stopped.

In modern times, sage is probably most often used in female conditions which have a strong hormonal component such as amenorrhea, dysmenorrhea and menorrhagia. Indeed, due to its powerful estrogenic effects, sage is especially useful to help tame the symptoms of menopause, such as hot flashes and night sweats. Further, because sage contains ample flavonoid phytoestrogens, natural health practitioners often recommend its use to help promote bone health in post-menopausal osteoporosis.

In Chinese medicine, sage is considered a ‘Yin’ remedy with a reputation for supporting the nervous system. Indeed, sage is extremely useful when used as a general tonic to help strengthen and fortify the nervous system and address conditions such as fatigue, nervous exhaustion, immune depletion, anxiety, excitability, poor memory and concentration.

Further, due to its remarkable antioxidant capacity, sage can help protect the body’s cells from free radical damage, which often results in apoptosis (cell death), impaired immunity, and chronic disease.

The German Commission E recommends sage for the treatment of mild gastrointestinal upset and excessive sweating, as well as for inflamed mouth and throat mucosa, while the ESCOP (European Scientific Cooperative on Phytotherapy) indicates its use for inflammations such as stomatitis, gingivitis, pharyngitis, and hyperhidrosis (excessive sweating).

PATHOLOGIES

COGNITIVE FUNCTION: Sage has a long history of use in conditions such as memory loss, Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. In fact, sage has been used in the treatment of cerebrovascular disease for over one thousand years. Thujone, one of the active components in sage is a GABA and Serotonin receptor antagonist, and as such, helps improve mental concentration, attention-span and focus.

Research has in fact shown that sage extract improves cognitive function in patients with mild to moderate Alzheimer’s disease, and can help attenuate agitation. Sage has also shown to help with word recall and cognitive performance in dementia patients.

Finally, sage has scientifically shown it-
INDIGESTION: Sage may be taken as a carminative to reduce gripping and other symptoms of indigestion, and as a powerful antispasmodic, helps reduce tension in smooth muscle and is thus of considerable value to help tame dysmenorrhea symptoms (painful menstrual cramps).

Sage’s bitter compounds stimulate upper digestive secretions, intestinal motility, bile flow, and pancreatic function, while its volatile oil exerts a carminative and stimulating effect on the digestion. As such, sage is a wonderfully safe and effective solution to help temper GI symptoms such as flatulence, loss of appetite, diarrhea, heartburn and bloating, among others.

INFLAMMATION: Rosmarinic acid, one of the primary active compounds in sage which is responsible for its tremendous anti-inflammatory potential, can be readily absorbed through the GI tract. Indeed, once ingested, rosmarinic acid affects the body’s inflammatory response by altering inflammatory messaging molecules and thus tempering inflammation.

Finally, the German Commission E recommends the internal use of sage for conditions of inflamed mucous membranes of the mouth and throat.

MENOPAUSAL SYMPTOMS: In 1997, the U.K. National Institute of Medical Herbalists sent out a questionnaire to its member practitioners on the clinical application and experience of sage. Of 49 respondents, 47 reported that they used sage in their practice and 45 reported that they used it particularly in the treatment of menopause. Almost all of the comments recorded had to do with sage’s application in hot flashes and night sweats, as well as its estrogenic effects, which directly mirror our own North American applications of the plant. As such, it seems safe to say that sage has tremendous therapeutic potential to help address the most bothersome symptoms of perimenopause and menopause.

CONCOMITANT PRODUCTS:

CONCOMITANT PRODUCTS: Sage is a plant with myriad clinical applications. Boasting of centuries of safe, effective and proven medicinal use, and having no known medicinal interactions, sage may be combined liberally with a wide variety of other plants or natural supplements, according to the condition to be treated. Sage may be used concomitantly with other herbs to help diminish menopausal symptoms, to help bolster cognitive function, to support the nervous system, as well as to help modulate the inflammatory process.


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