

Do Your Body A Favor And Detoxify With Dandelion

Just about everybody knows what a dandelion is. In the western world it is a weed, but in many other societies it is an important herb that is used to treat many common diseases and conditions of the human body.

It is also a food, being used in salads and the roots are also used by some as a coffee substitute the same as chicory. It is also used to make a herbal tea, and most people have likely heard of dandelion tea. However, its medicinal properties are not so well known, even though it has been used for hundreds, if not thousands, of years for the treatment of many conditions including those associated with the gall bladder, liver and kidneys.

However, that is not all, and there are several more traditional uses of dandelion in the folk medicine of many different countries including conditions as diverse as water retention and eczema. So, taking all of this into consideration, what exactly are the main benefits of dandelion to the body and what is it that provides these benefits?

Dandelion contains its fair share of minerals and vitamins, and is rich in vitamin C of course, with its strong antioxidant properties. It also contains the antioxidant vitamin A together with several B vitamins and the sunshine vitamin, vitamin D, which is so important for the absorption of calcium by the kidneys and into the bone structure. The minerals it contains is like an encyclopedia entry of minerals important to the human body. It's not so much what minerals dandelion contains, as what it doesn't contain.

The list includes phosphorus, iron, magnesium, calcium, potassium, silicon, manganese and boron, and the organic nutrients include lecithin, carotenoids, terpenoids, tannins, sterols, choline, inulin, asparagine and so on. It would take a whole book to describe the health benefits of each of these, but an attempt will be made later to discuss the more important of them.

Suffice it to say that the list contains antioxidants, anti-inflammatories, and substances that help to reduce blood cholesterol levels and also maintain the health of your blood and major organs. However, the effect of dandelion on the liver and the digestive system are due largely to substances known collectively as taraxacin. That is what gives dandelion its bitter taste.

What was once known as taraxin, is now known to consist of sesquiterpene lactones known as eudesmanolide and germacranolide, which although claimed to be unique to the dandelion, are very similar to other sesquiterpenes found in chicory. In fact, dicaffeoylquinic acid and chicoric acid (dicaffeoyltartaric acid) have been found to comprise a significant proportion of the extract from dandelion roots, together with a number of phenolic acids and flavanoids. Each of these, of course, is important and effective antioxidants, responsible for many positive health effects in the body.

Among the more important of these is the stimulation of the circulation of the blood throughout the body. The sesquiterpenes are also believed to support the activity of the pancreas, and the presence of so many strong antioxidant species within the leaves and roots of the dandelion explains the traditional use of dandelion for the treatment of inflammatory diseases.

Antioxidants support the immune system that causes inflammation when it is under stress. Studies of rats have indicated that dandelion is effective in reducing acute pancreatitis, which is itself an inflammatory condition. The large quercetin glycoside and flavanoid content of dandelion root extract possess anti-inflammatory properties, and suddenly dandelion is beginning to take on the appearance of a 'wonder plant'.

However, let's get away from the technical stuff for a while, and check out exactly what you can use dandelion for. Pregnant and post-menopausal women can gain the benefit of all these nutrients detailed above by taking dandelion extract, and it also has a diuretic effect. Although mild, this can help to remove excess water from the body, and helps to reduce blood pressure and the effects of heart problems. LDL cholesterol levels can be reduced by virtue of its anti-oxidant properties, and can help to resolve minor digestive complaints.

Traditionally it is claimed to have been used as a laxative and a cure for rheumatism. The latter can be explained by its antioxidant effects, and the way the sesquiterpenes reduce the inflammation associated with rheumatism. It is this inflammation of the tissues that causes so much of the swelling and pain of rheumatism and arthritis. Anti-inflammatories help to reduce this effect.

Dandelion is also believed to stimulate the flow of bile from the gall bladder to the duodenum, and help promote the digestion of fats and oils, thus alleviating many of the digestive problems associated with a fatty diet. This also appears to have the effect of stimulating the appetite, and dandelion juice is frequently drunk before a meal for these reasons. It is believed to help bladder and kidney stones, and also helps to alleviate infections of the urinary tract.

Although dandelion is normally safe to take, those with problems associated with the bile ducts should not take it, and if you are already on diuretic

drugs, or any medicines designed to lower your blood pressure, you should stay clear of dandelion extract. The same is true if you are taking lithium for manic depression since some of the components of dandelion juice can exaggerate the side effects. It is also recommended that diabetics do not use dandelion extract, and neither should anyone on blood thinning drugs such as Coumadin, or any other form of warfarin.

Although dandelion can be a very effective natural remedy for many conditions, you should always refer to your physician before taking it, since it could interfere with any medications you are currently taking. Your doctor might also be aware of certain medical conditions you have that, while you are not being treated for, could deteriorate in the presence of one of the constituents of dandelion extract.

Although all of this could suggest that dandelion is dangerous to take, in fact what it indicates is that it is very effective against many conditions, and that taking it could lead to the effects of an overdose of the treatment you are already on. Had it not so many contra-indications, dandelion wouldn't be as effective at doing what it does.

About the Author

More information on [dandelion root](#) tea is available at VitaNet ®, LLC Health Food Store <http://vitanetonline.com/>

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