



LEMON BALM (*Melissa officinalis*)

COMMON INDICATIONS

- Insomnia and Anxiety relief
- Herpes Treatment

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Lemon Balm is considered a calming herb and belongs to the mint family. Its use dates back to ancient Greece and it has been used to reduce stress and anxiety, promote sleep, improve appetite, and ease indigestion. Today, lemon balm is grown all over the world and can be found in medicines, cosmetics, and furniture polish manufacturing.

BENEFITS & MECHANISM OF ACTION:

Insomnia and Anxiety Relief

There is much evidence to support the use of lemon balm combined with other calming herbs (such as valerian) to reduce anxiety and promote sleep. In one study, it was found that, compared to other botanicals such as valerian, lemon balm exhibited the greatest inhibition of GABA Transaminase, the enzyme that degrades GABA (Awadet al, 2007). Based on these results, it is believed that lemon balm may work similarly to anticonvulsants such as Valproic acid. Few studies have examined lemon balm by itself, except for topical use. For example, in one study of children with dyssomnia and restlessness, it was found that a combination of valerian and lemon balm resulted in a significant reduction in severity of all symptoms (Müller et al, 2006).

Herpes Treatment

Some studies suggest that topical ointments containing lemon balm may help heal cold sores caused by the herpes simplex virus (HSV). In one study of 116 people with HSV, those who applied lemon balm cream to their lip sores experienced significant improvement in redness and swelling after only 2 days. Other symptoms, such as pain and scabbing, did not improve. Both the people and their doctors reported that lemon balm ointment was highly effective (Wöbling et al, 1994). Other similar studies have shown that when lemon balm when used to treat the primary infection of HSV, results in little to no recurrence. The cream has also been found to reduce the healing time of both genital and oral herpes.

Other

Some evidence suggests that lemon balm, in combination with other herbs, may help treat indigestion. In Germany, lemon balm is licensed as a medicinal tea for GI tract disorders. Others reveal that lemon balm oil has a high degree of antibacterial activity. In one study, lemon balm showed adequate activity against *Listeria monocytogenes* and *Staphylococcus aureus* (Gutierrez et al, 2008).

In addition, some studies have found that lemon balm may help improve cognitive function and decrease agitation in people with Alzheimer disease (Dos Santos-Neto et al, 2006).

One study of 58 hyperlipidemic patients found that lemon balm supplementation as an antioxidant significantly decreased LDL and may serve to lower LDL and AST levels in patients with borderline hyperlipidemia (Jandaghi et al, 2016).

In another study of 55 volunteers, 14-day treatment with lyophilized lemon balm extract was found to significantly reduce the frequency of palpitations compared to placebo (Alijaniha et al, 2015).

A study involving 55 radiology staff workers found that, after drinking a lemon balm infusion, workers had significantly increased plasma levels of catalase, superoxide dismutase, and glutathione peroxidase and a marked reduction in plasma DNA damage, myeloperoxidase, and lipid peroxidation (Zeraatipishe et al, 2011).

DOSE:

- Capsules: Take 300 to 500 mg dried lemon balm, 3 times daily or as needed.
- Tea: 1.5 to 4.5 grams (1/4 to 1 tsp.) of dried lemon balm herb in 150 mL of hot water. Steep and drink up to 4 times daily.
- Tincture: 60 drops of lemon balm daily.
- Topical: Apply 700 mg topical cream to affected area, 4 times daily.
- For cold sores or herpes sores, apply cream topically 5 times a day.

CAUTIONS & SIDE EFFECTS:

- Pregnant and breastfeeding women should not take lemon balm.
- Caution use in Hypothyroidism as one study showed lemon balm may inhibit deiodination of both
- Lemon balm may potentially interact with certain medications including sedatives, thyroid medications, and HIV medications. Though it is not clear whether lemon balm interacts with antiretroviral agents, until more is known, avoid concomitant use of lemon balm and medications used for HIV treatment.

References:

INSOMNIA & ANXIETY RELIEF

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HERPES TREATMENT

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