



SLIPPERY ELM (*Ulmus fulva*)

COMMON INDICATIONS:

- Sore throat
- Cough
- Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD)
- Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis, and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
- Diarrhea
- Wounds, burns, boils, psoriasis, and other skin conditions (external)

GENERAL COMMENTS:

The slippery elm is a small tree abundant in various parts of North America and the inner bark of the tree has important medicinal value and is listed as an official drug of the United States Pharmacopoeia. Slippery elm is known for its soothing properties and Native Americans once used slippery elm to create balms or salves to heal wounds, burns, ulcers, psoriasis and other skin conditions. They also used it orally to soothe sore throats, relieve coughs, and help with diarrhea and stomach issues. Slippery elm was also used during the American Revolution to help treat and soothe the wounds of soldiers.

BENEFITS & MECHANISM OF ACTION:

Slippery elm contains a substance called mucilage, which is a polysaccharide that becomes a gel when mixed with water. The mucilage coats and soothes the mouth, throat, stomach, and intestines. In one study of 24 graduate speech pathology students, it was found that administration of slippery elm resulted in significantly improved ratings of laryngeal/pharyngeal discomfort (Watts et al, 2012). Slippery elm also contains antioxidants that have been found to help relieve inflammatory bowel conditions (Langmead et al, 2002). It is believed that slippery elm also causes reflux stimulation of nerve endings in the gastrointestinal tract leading to increased mucus secretion which may protect the gastrointestinal tract against ulcers and excess acidity. In one study, 31 patients who fulfilled the Rome II criteria for IBS received a mixture of dried, powdered bilberry fruit, slippery elm bark, agrimony aerial parts, and cinnamon quills and the mixture was found to significantly improve a number of IBS symptoms (Hawrelak et al, 2010).

DOSE: Capsule: 1-2, 150 mg capsules before meals

- Fluid Extract: 5 mL three times daily
- Tea: Mix ½ tsp powder with 1 c hot water up to three times daily

STANDARDIZATION:

- Should be standardized to 60% concentration

CAUTIONS & SIDE EFFECTS:

- No serious side effects have been reported for slippery elm.
- Though slippery elm is likely safe in pregnancy and breast feeding, safety has not been established and slippery elm should be avoided.
- Because slippery elm coats the digestive tract, it may slow down the absorption of other drugs or herbs. Take slippery elm 2 hours before or after other herbs or medications you may be taking.

References:

1. Bock S. Integrative medical treatment of inflammatory bowel disease. *Int J Integr Med.* 2000;2(5):21-29.
2. Brown AC, Hairfield M, Richards DG, McMillin DL, Mein EA, Nelson CD. Medical nutrition therapy as a potential complementary treatment for psoriasis -- five case reports. *Altern Med Rev.* 2004;9(3):297-307.
3. Slippery Elm, its Biochemistry, and use as a Complementary and Alternative Treatment for Laryngeal Irritation
4. Hawrelak JA, Myers SP. Effects of two natural medicine formulations on irritable bowel syndrome symptoms: a pilot study. *J Altern Complement Med.* 2010;16(10):1065-71.
5. Langmead L, Dawson C, Hawkins C, Banna N, Loo S, Rampton DS. Antioxidant effects of herbal therapies used by patients with inflammatory bowel disease: an in vitro study. *Aliment Pharmacol Ther.* 2002;16(2):197-205.
6. Watts CR, Rousseau B. Slippery Elm, its Biochemistry, and use as a Complementary and Alternative Treatment for Laryngeal Irritation. *J Invest Biochem.* 2012; 1(1): 17-23.