

Silymarin: A Potent Antioxidant, Liver Protector, and Anti-Cancer Agent



Offers hope for the prevention of cancer ... and as an adjunct treatment

The novel and unique ways that silymarin fights cancer means that it may offer hope not only for the prevention of cancer, but also for the treatment of cancer, both alone and when combined with existing cancer drugs. This is because silymarin has shown direct tumor killing properties of its own, and is also synergistically effective with two popular chemotherapy agents, doxorubicin and cisplatin.²⁵²⁶¹⁷

Why isn't silymarin being hailed as a cancer drug in the medical world?

With such an impressive list of accomplishments you would expect silymarin to be quickly developed as a broad-spectrum cancer fighter. But as a natural, herbal product that has been used for more than 30 years primarily for liver problems, it has a strike against it. If it were a new drug that had been developed and patented by a pharmaceutical company, it would be hailed as a potential breakthrough in the fight against cancer. But no pharmaceutical company wants to spend millions of dollars doing research on an herb that can't be patented.

Unfortunately, interest in researching silymarin's efficacy at fighting cancer in humans has only been promoted by a small group of dedicated scientists who have recognized silymarin's novel, powerful, and multiple cancer fighting properties. One can only hope that silymarin's natural origins don't condemn it to becoming only a scientific curiosity.

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Silybin/Phospholipid Complex (Silyphos)

Two recent innovations in silymarin supplementation have greatly enhanced the benefits we can obtain from silymarin. The first was the discovery that silybin, one of several flavonoids found in the "silymarin fraction" extracted from milk thistle, is the most potent constituent. Because of this, techniques were developed to further purify silymarin to obtain pure silybin. Because silybin is now recognized as the active flavonoid in silymarin, most recent research has utilized pure silybin rather than silymarin itself.

One of the inherent problems with oral silymarin or silybin supplementation is its very poor absorption. Recently, a new complex of silybin and natural phospholipids was developed. This improved product is known by the name of Silyphos. By complexing silybin with phospholipids, scientists were able to make silybin into a much more soluble and better-absorbed form.

This silybin/phospholipid complex (Silyphos) was found to have significantly improved bioavailability, up to ten times better absorption, and greater effectiveness.²⁷²⁸²⁹ This dramatically enhances the benefits of silybin, because typical silymarin extracts and silybin are very poorly utilized when taken orally.

How safe is silymarin?

Milk thistle has been safely used as a medicinal herb for centuries. Although its effects can be quite dramatic, it is gentle and well tolerated.

Speak with your health care professional if you have cancer and are on chemotherapy drugs, before taking this or any other herb. Studies show that some chemotherapy drugs have a synergistic effect with silymarin and may increase the drug's effects. If you're taking drugs known to cause liver damage (like acetaminophen), silymarin may help repair and prevent future damage.

An antidote to environmental toxins

James Duke, Ph.D., a leading authority on healing herbs, says "Even if you don't have liver damage or liver disease, milk thistle helps improve liver function by helping the liver remove toxins from your body."³⁰ In this modern world filled with environmental and chemical toxins, silymarin is an antioxidant you just might want to add to your nutritional supplement regimen.

While milk thistle and silymarin have had decades of very positive results for protecting the liver, recent studies into silybin's remarkable anti-cancer properties have provided even more compelling reasons to consider supplementation. And now, with the advent of the more potent and much better utilized Silybin/Phospholipid Complex (Silyphos), the amazing benefits contained within the milk thistle are available to everyone.