Cat’s Claw

url: https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/cats-claw  
  
  
Cat s Claw  
Common Names: cat s claw, u a de gato  
  
Latin Names: Uncaria tomentosa, Uncaria guianensis  
  
Background  
Cat s claw is a woody vine that grows wild in the Amazon rainforest and other tropical areas of Central and South America. Its thorns resemble a cat s claws.  
The two most common species are U. tomentosa and U. guianensis. Most commercial preparations of cat s claw contain U. tomentosa.  
Use of cat s claw dates back 2,000 years. Indigenous people of South and Central America used it to ward off disease.  
Today, cat s claw is promoted as a dietary supplement for a variety of health conditions, including viral infections (such as herpes, human papilloma virus, and HIV), Alzheimer s disease, cancer, arthritis, diverticulitis, peptic ulcers, colitis, gastritis, hemorrhoids, parasites, and leaky bowel syndrome.  
How Much Do We Know?  
There have been very few high-quality clinical trials (studies done in people) of cat s claw.  
What Have We Learned?  
There s no conclusive scientific evidence based on studies in people that supports using cat s claw for any health purpose.  
What Do We Know About Safety?  
Cat s claw appears to be safe when used orally for short periods of time. However, it can cause headache, dizziness, and vomiting in some people.  
Cat s claw might make the immune system more active, which could increase symptoms of autoimmune diseases. If you have an autoimmune disease, consult your health care provider before using cat s claw.  
Little is known about whether it s safe to use cat s claw during pregnancy or while breastfeeding.  
Cat s claw may interact with some medications, including some HIV drugs called protease inhibitors. If you take medication, talk with your health care provider before using cat s claw.  
Cat s claw may lower blood pressure and slow blood clotting. Talk to your health care provider if either of these effects might be a concern for you.  
Keep in Mind  
Take charge of your health talk with your health care providers about any complementary health approaches you use. Together, you can make shared, well-informed decisions.  
For More Information  
Using Dietary Supplements Wisely  
Know the Science: How Medications and Supplements Can Interact  
Know the Science: How To Make Sense of a Scientific Journal Article  
NCCIH Clearinghouse  
The NCCIH Clearinghouse provides information on NCCIH and complementary and integrative health approaches, including publications and searches of Federal databases of scientific and medical literature. The Clearinghouse does not provide medical advice, treatment recommendations, or referrals to practitioners.  
  
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Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS), National Institutes of Health (NIH)  
ODS seeks to strengthen knowledge and understanding of dietary supplements by evaluating scientific information, supporting research, sharing research results, and educating the public. Its resources include publications (such as Dietary Supplements: What You Need To Know) and fact sheets on a variety of specific supplement ingredients and products (such as vitamin D and multivitamin/mineral supplements).  
  
Website: https://ods.od.nih.gov  
  
Email: ods@nih.gov(link sends email)  
  
Key References  
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Weiss J. Herb-drug interaction potential of anti-borreliae effective extracts from Uncaria tomentosa (Samento) and Otoba parvifolia (Banderol) assessed in vitro. Molecules. 2018;24(1):137.  
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