Horse Chestnut

url: https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/horse-chestnut  
  
  
Horse Chestnut  
Common Names: horse chestnut, buckeye, Spanish chestnut  
  
Latin Names: Aesculus hippocastanum  
  
Background  
Horse chestnut is a tree native to parts of southeastern Europe. Its fruits contain seeds that resemble sweet chestnuts but have a bitter taste.  
Historically, horse chestnut seed extract was used for joint pain, bladder and gastrointestinal problems, fever, leg cramps, and other conditions.  
Today, horse chestnut seed extract is promoted for chronic venous insufficiency (CVI; poor blood flow in the veins of the legs, which may lead to leg pain, swelling, itchiness, and other symptoms), irritable bowel syndrome, male infertility, and other conditions.  
How Much Do We Know?  
Some studies in people have looked at horse chestnut seed extract for CVI, but very little research has been done on its use for other conditions.  
What Have We Learned?  
A 2012 systematic review of 17 studies suggested that horse chestnut seed extract can improve symptoms of CVI. Results from one of these studies suggested that horse chestnut seed extract may be as effective as wearing compression stockings. The reviewers noted, however, that there is a need for more rigorous, large-scale randomized controlled trials to assess the efficacy of this treatment option for CVI.  
Small amounts of research have been done on horse chestnut seed extract for male infertility associated with varicocele (a swelling of veins inside the scrotum) and for irritable bowel syndrome, but there s not enough information to draw definite conclusions about its effects on either condition.  
What Do We Know About Safety?  
The raw seeds, bark, flowers, and leaves of horse chestnut are unsafe because they contain a toxic component. Standardized horse chestnut seed extracts, from which this component has been removed, appear to be safe for short-term use.  
Horse chestnut seed extracts are generally well tolerated but may cause side effects such as dizziness, nausea, and digestive upsets in some people.  
Little is known about whether it s safe to use horse chestnut seed extract during pregnancy or while breastfeeding. No one including women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should consume raw horse chestnut.  
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  
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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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Website: https://ods.od.nih.gov  
  
Email: ods@nih.gov(link sends email)  
  
Key References  
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