Thunder God Vine

url: https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/thunder-god-vine  
  
  
Thunder God Vine  
Common Names: thunder god vine, lei gong teng  
  
Latin Names: Tripterygium wilfordii  
  
Background  
Thunder god vine is a perennial commonly grown in southeast China. It has reportedly been used for hundreds of years in traditional Chinese medicine.  
Currently, thunder god vine is promoted for use orally (by mouth) for rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, Crohn s disease, lupus, psoriasis, fever, and other conditions. It is also promoted for use topically (applied to the skin) for rheumatoid arthritis.  
The leaves and roots of thunder god vine are used.  
How Much Do We Know?  
Studies have looked at the effectiveness and safety of oral thunder god vine for rheumatoid arthritis, some kidney disorders, psoriasis, and Crohn s disease. A small number of studies have looked at the topical use of thunder god vine for rheumatoid arthritis. Little reliable research has been done on oral or topical use of thunder god vine for other health conditions.  
What Have We Learned?  
Preliminary research suggests that oral or topical thunder god vine might be beneficial for rheumatoid arthritis symptoms. Some studies have suggested that thunder god vine plus standard medical treatment may be more effective than standard treatment alone for symptoms such as joint swelling and tenderness. Other studies have suggested that thunder god vine on its own may be at least as effective as standard medical treatments in reducing joint swelling and tenderness.  
A small amount of preliminary research suggests that thunder god vine might be helpful for Crohn s disease, some kidney disorders, and psoriasis, but there are no definite conclusions.  
There is not enough evidence to show whether thunder god vine is helpful for other health conditions.  
What Do We Know About Safety?  
Thunder god vine may have side effects, including digestive problems, abnormal heart rates, high blood pressure, less blood cell production, kidney problems, decreased bone mineral content (with long-term use), infertility, menstrual cycle changes, rashes, diarrhea, headache, and hair loss. Because some of these side effects are serious, the risks of using thunder god vine may be greater than its benefits.  
Thunder god vine can be extremely poisonous if the extract is not prepared properly.  
Thunder god vine should not be used during pregnancy because it may cause birth defects. Little is known about whether it s safe to use thunder god vine while breastfeeding.  
Keep in Mind  
Thunder god vine should not be used to replace conventional medical care. Conventional medical treatment for rheumatoid arthritis can delay or prevent joint damage it doesn t just treat symptoms. If you have rheumatoid arthritis, follow your health care provider s instructions on how to treat your condition.  
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)  
  
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