

Gymnema Sylvester: Herbal Medicine for Diabetes

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Gymnema has been used as a medicinal herb to treat diabetes for over two millennia. This plant has the unique property of suppressing the craving for sweets upon contact of the leaves or extraction of the active properties of the plant on the tongue.

The craving for sweets will be aborted for approximately two to four hours. So in some circles, this plant has also gained a reputation as one that promotes weight loss.

It is an herb native to the tropical forests of the southern and central portions of India. It is a plant from the milkweed family. The major bioactive constituent of the plant is a saponin known as a gynemic acid. Saponins have a somewhat disruptive effect on the permeability of small nutrients, such as glucose from being absorbed through the layers of the intestinal tract. A research study published in 1999 by Persaud et al, suggests the rise in insulin levels may be due to regeneration of the cells of the pancreas. This study was followed with the findings reinforced in 2005, using a water extract of .125 mg/ml *Gymnema*. The results revealed increased intracellular calcium and insulin secretion of Beta cells of the pancreas.

In addition saponins resemble cholesterol in their biochemical structure and therefore are an effective constituent in increasing the metabolism of cholesterol through the biochemical pathway of the liver resulting in increased fecal excretion versus increased storage of cholesterol. Many research studies, mostly done on animals, have shown the lowering effects saponins have on random blood cholesterol levels.

ACTIONS:

- Lowers blood sugar levels
- Lowers cholesterol
- Lowers atherosclerosis
- Aborts the craving for sweets

TOXICITY:

- None reported in humans.
- Very toxic to animals. Known to cause death to fish.
- Side Effect: Acid reflux has been reported when taken alone and without food.

Clinically, we have found a combination of herbs to be more effective in lowering blood sugar levels and restoring function of damaged organs such as the pancreas and liver, especially when combined with co-factors such as chromium and B vitamins to name a few. We have several such products stocked in our medicinalary. Please feel free to inquire on whether one of these products would be beneficial for you.