

HOLISTIC HERBALISM ADVANCED CLINICAL PROGRAM MATERIA MEDICA

Common Name	Fennel
Latin	Foeniculum vulgare
Family	Apiaceae
Other Known Names	Fennel Seed
Energy	Sweet, Spicy
Taste	Warm, Moist
Part Used	Seeds
Location	It is indigenous to the Mediterranean region but widely cultivated elsewhere. It is naturalized in California.
Gathering	When the seeds are mature.
Cultivation	It prefers full sun and can grow in average garden soil.

HERBAL ACTION	TISSUE AFFINITY	MAJOR CONSTITUENTS
Antibacterial	Female Reproductive System	Terpenoid Ethers:
Anti-inflammatory	Lung	Anethole-antibacterial
Antioxidant	Digestion	Anisaldehyde-carminative
Antispasmodic	Kidney/Bladder	Estragole-potentially toxic
Antitussive	Immune System	Flavonoids:
Aromatic		Kaempferol-antibacterial, antioxidant
Carminative		Quercetin-antiinflammatory
Diuretic		Rutin-antiinflammatory
Galactagogue		Coumarins:
		Bergapten-antiinflammatory
		Xanthotoxin-antispasmodic
		Imperatorin-antiinflammatory
		Limonene (Monoterpene)-antitussive
		Fenchone (Monoterpene)-antibacterial

SPECIFIC INDICATIONS

Regulates the qi/carminative

Terminal flatulence (foul smelling gas), chronic flatulence with distention and pain.

It is an effective galactagogue that prevents colic in infants.

PRIMARY USES

- Fennel seed is very effective for digestive disturbances, including flatulence with distention and pain, colic, nausea, dyspepsia and borborygmus.
- Fennel seed is useful for mild coughs and upper respiratory tract congestion.
- This herb inhibits type IV allergic reactions (delayed sensitivity allergic response) and can be useful for mild to moderate allergic rhinitis if taken within a larger protocol.
- Foeniculum seed is one of the more effective galactagogues, it stimulates milk flow and also prevents colic in breastfed infants.
- According to a controlled trial, Fennel extract may be beneficial to reduce dysmenorrhea pain.
- Fennel seed can relieve minor urinary tract irritation from bladder infections.
- Frozen stalks of the vegetable can be given to teething children to chew on. The naturally occurring essential oils in the stalk combined with the cold temperature provide an anodyne activity.
- Compress of Fennel seed tea can be used topically to treat blepharitis.

FORMULA COMBINATIONS

- For rebellious qi symptoms such as belching and GERD, combine Fennel seed with Artichoke leaf and Wild Yam.
- Fennel combined with Lavender flowers is effective for treating “terminal flatulence” (foul smelling gas) and intestinal dysbiosis.
- In TCM Fennel seed is used, along with Spicebush, Green Tangerine peel/Qing Pi, Mu Xiang or Lesser Galangal root for hernia pain.
- Fennel combines well with Red Clover, Yerba Santa, Thyme and/or Horehound and Elecampane for mild coughs and upper respiratory tract congestion.
- For acute Allergic Rhinitis, combine Fennel seed with cultivated Eyebright, Yerba Mansa, and/or Collinsonia.
- Combine Fennel Seed with Shatavari, Blessed Thistle, Oat Tops and mineral rich herbs to stimulate milk flow in a breastfeeding person.
- A combination of Fennel seed, Chamomile and Lemon Balm is effective for treating colicky babies
- Combine Fennel seed with Cyperus, Black Haw or Cramp Bark, Corydalis and Jamaica Dogwood for dysmenorrhea.

DOSAGE

Tea (Infusion): 5 gram. dried seed, 500 ml hot water, steep covered for 30 minutes, take 3 cups/day

Tincture (1:5), 50-60% ETOH Dose: 1-2 mL (20-40 gtt.) TID/QID

Fennel accounts for 1 part in formulation.

PREPARATIONS

Fennel is often used as a flavoring agent in teas as the essential oil. See notes below.

CONTRAINDICATIONS & DRUG INTERACTIONS

Handling fresh Fennel followed by sun exposure can cause photodermatitis in sensitive people.

The essential oil extraction of fennel seed contains estragole, also known as methyl chavicol is also found in Basil, Anise, Tarragon, Cinnamon leaf and others. A high enough concentration of this compound is known to be toxic.

The German government has recommended limited use of foods containing estragole, including Fennel seed, Basil, Tarragon and Nutmeg. The research this warning is based on are animal studies (mice) using isolated estragole. Further studies question the warning as the levels of estragole given the mice do not represent amounts humans consume.

Secondly, humans and mice metabolize estragole very differently and pure estragole is very different than the substance found in the matrix of an herb.

Pure estragole is suspected of being carcinogenic and genotoxic.

In an Italian study the researchers strongly challenged the validity of the warnings concerning estragole found in Fennel. They point out that multiple constituents of Fennel also inhibit the bioactivation pathway that causes the formation of potentially hepatotoxic compounds.

SPECIAL NOTES OF CONSIDERATION

Chinese name: Xiao Hui Xiang

Fennel is a spice especially prized in Italian and French cooking.

The seeds are often available to nibble on as a breath freshener and to enhance digestion at Indian restaurants. Culpeper (1651) indicated that Fennel consumes the phlegmatic humour: people who are too fat become more lean. He also indicated much of the same uses as we know today including, Digestive, Hepatobiliary, Urinary, improving milk flow, respiratory health.

RESOURCES & REFERENCES

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