

Dendrobium (shi hu)

What is dendrobium? What is it used for?

Dendrobium is a type of orchid. The plant consists of a long, thin stem, which is golden yellow in color, with a flower at the end (which usually has five or six petals). Different varieties of dendrobium have different colors, but the most common colors are yellow and pink. The stem is used in herbal remedies.

In traditional Chinese medicine, dendrobium is used primarily to replenish fluids. It is commonly used as a yin tonic to moisten the stomach and lungs, and has also been traditionally used as a tea to replace kidney yin *jing*. It is very effective for treating conditions such as dry mouth, stomach pain, mouth sores, sunstroke, and other conditions caused by dry weather, pollution or smoke.

Additionally, dendrobium is used to enhance skin quality. Dendrobium keeps the skin moist; constant drinking of dendrobium tea is believed to result in soft, beautiful skin.

How much dendrobium should I take?

The typical recommended dose of dendrobium is between 6-12 grams, which is boiled in water and used as a tea. Larger doses (up to 20 grams) may be used depending on the condition being treated.

What forms of dendrobium are available?

Dendrobium powders and extracts are available at most Asian markets and specialty health food stores.

What can happen if I take too much dendrobium? Are there any interactions I should be aware of? What precautions should I take?

The American Herbal Products Association has given dendrobium a class one rating, meaning that it is safe when consumed at appropriate doses. However, large doses can have an adverse effect on the heart and lungs, and overdoses can cause convulsions. As of this writing, there are no known drug interactions with dendrobium. As always, make sure to consult with a qualified, licensed health care provider before taking dendrobium or any other herbal remedy or dietary supplement.

References

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