

Because of the many potential side effects from overuse or large doses, caution should be exercised in its use.

Preparation and Dosage

Used as tea, in capsules, as tincture.

Tincture: Dried root, 1:5 with 50 percent alcohol, 30 to 60 drops up to 3 times a day.

Tea: ½ to 1 teaspoon (2 to 5 ml) of powdered root in 8 ounces (237 ml) water, simmer 15 minutes, strain. Drink up to 3 cups a day.

Capsules: 2 to 8 double-ought capsules per day.

Side Effects and Contraindications

Many. Because of licorice's many strengths, a lot of people overuse it, with sometimes serious side effects. Overdoses or long use of large doses can cause severe potassium depletion (hypokalemia), hypertension, decrease in plasma renin and aldosterone levels, edema, and at very large doses decreased body and thymus weight and blood cell counts. Because of the strong estrogenic activity of licorice, it will also cause breast growth in men, especially when combined with other estrogenic herbs. Luckily, all these conditions tend to abate within 2 to 4 weeks after licorice intake ceases. Caution should be used, however, in length and strength of dosages. Contraindicated in hypertension, hypokalemia, pregnancy, and hypernatremia, and in persons taking estrogen therapy or corticosteroids. Daniel Mowrey, in his *Herbal Tonic Therapies* (Wings Books, 1993), suggests that the side effects from licorice are all from licorice extracts and none are from use of the whole plant (i.e., the ground root) taken in capsules. The citations I have found for side effects are generally for licorice candy or extracts. Mowrey comments that this propensity of licorice to cause side effects when extracts are used supports the use of the plant itself, which often contains other compounds that ameliorate the side effects of extracted constituents.

Alternatives to Licorice

The American species, found wild throughout North America, though not sweet can be reliably substituted.