

Chanca Piedra (Break-Stone): Overview

Indigenous to the Amazonian rain forest, Chanca Piedra, which means "stone breaker" in Spanish, has been used by many cultures as a remedy for kidney stones. Research on the plant in Germany, Brazil and India has found it an effective therapy for kidney health and other major health concerns, including high blood pressure, gallstones and diabetes.

Chanca Piedra increases the solubility of alkaline salts and help to maintain normal bacterial levels in the urogenital tract. The phenolic component that it has, have been identified as a strong antioxidant. It is also known its hepatoprotector effect on the Hepatitis type B, C, A, herpes, and HIV.

Chanca Piedra has been proven in scientific studies to have antihepatotoxic, antispasmodic, antiviral, bactericidal, febrifugal, and hypoglycemic activity. It is believed to help stimulate the production of bile and to promote healthy liver, kidney and gall bladder function.

Research done in Brazil at the Federal University of Santa Catarina in 1984 on Chanca Piedra revealed an alkaloid (phyllanthoside) in the leaves and stem with strong antispasmodic activity. It served as a relaxing agent for smooth muscles and they concluded that its spasmolytic action probably accounted for the efficacy of Chanca Piedra in expelling stones. Brazilian researchers have also discovered powerful, long-lasting pain-blocking activity in the roots.

The analgesic activity of Chanca Piedra was demonstrated in 1994 and 1995 by another research group in Brazil. The diuretic, hypotensive and hypoglycemic effects of *Phyllanthus niruri* were documented in a 1995 human study, which showed a significant diuretic effect, and a significant reduction in systolic blood pressure in non-diabetic hypertensive and female subjects. Blood glucose was also significantly reduced in diabetic patients taking Chanca Piedra for 10 days. It is also considered an immune system stimulator.

The plant is shredded and boiled and then lemon juice is added as a tonic for the liver (taken in small amounts four times daily). It is also traditionally used to clear obstructions throughout the various internal organs of the body by promoting the elimination of mucus and stones.

In different areas of South America, Chanca Piedra is used to treat a wide variety of conditions. It is used to treat edema and excess uric acid (as in gout), as well as to treat stones of the gall bladder, kidney, and bladder. In some areas, it is used to treat malaria, typhoid fever, flu, colds, constipation, dysentery, or stomach ache. It is also used there, for inflammation of the bowels (IBS), pimples, diabetes, and ulcers.

Chanca Piedra has also traditionally been used for diabetes, prostate disorders, asthma, fever, tumors, bladder infections, as a diuretic, for painful joints, jaundice, indigestion, vaginitis, viruses of the reproductive tract, proctitis, poor circulation, excessive phlegm, bronchitis, and coughs. It is also considered an anti-spasmodic and muscle relaxant, specific to the urinary tract system.

Traditionally it is also used as an anodyne (pain reliever), aperitif (appetite stimulator), a digestive, carminative (helps gas to be expelled from stomach and intestines), and vermifuge

(expels worms and other parasites from the intestinal tract), diuretic, and emmenagogue (stimulates menstrual flow).

Modern life has stressed the liver of the average person. Chanca Piedra can be used, cycling on and off throughout the year, to assist the liver in performing its normal function of detoxification of the body. Liver stressors include eating excessive dairy, meat, and sugar, fried fast foods, processed foods with preservatives, antibiotics, pesticides, drinking water "decontaminated" by chlorine, drinking water containing parasites, the use of hormones in young women as contraception and in menopausal women as a means of preventing osteoporosis and heart disease, the use of steroid hormones to combat chronic inflammatory diseases and the use of toxic chemotherapies to combat cancer.

Break-Stone gained world-wide attention in the late 1980s due to the plant's antiviral activity against Hepatitis B. Preliminary clinical trials with *P. niruri* on children with infective hepatitis using an Indian drug containing *Phyllanthus amarus* as the main ingredient showed promising results which fueled the subsequent in vitro and in vivo studies. The in vitro inactivation of Hepatitis B by Break-Stone was reported in India in 1982. A study that followed indicated that in vivo, Break-Stone eliminated Hepatitis B in mammals within 3-6 weeks. Several subsequent studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s failed to produce any effect against hepatitis, but other research conducted from 1990 to 1995 has indicated that Chanca Piedra does demonstrate antiviral activity against Hepatitis B.

Phyllanthus niruri/amarus is considered, based on accumulated research, as the most effective natural, non-toxic remedy for the Hepatitis B virus, a pathogen now carried by hundreds of millions of people around the world.

Research during the 1990s on Break-Stone revealed that its antiviral activity extends to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). A Japanese research group discovered *Phyllanthus niruri*'s HIV-1 reverse transcriptase inhibition properties in 1992 with a simple water extract of the plant. Bristol-Myers Squibb's Pharmaceutical Research Institute isolated at least one of the constituents in the plant responsible for this activity – a novel compound which they named "niruside" and described in a 1996 study.

Side-Effects; Counter-Indicators and Warnings

There has been no toxicity reported in any of the clinical studies, nor have there been any side-effects reported, except for an occasional case of cramps during the expulsion of stones from the use of the whole plant either as a tea or in "crude" (whole plant) extracts in capsules. If cramping occurs, dosage can be cut in half.

Chanca Piedra is safe for pregnant women to take.