

CAT'S CLAW

By Maya Cointreau

Uncaria tomentosa
(*U. Guianensis*)

Parts used: Root and inner bark

Properties: Anti-bacterial, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, anti-rheumatic, cytoprotectant, immuno-stimulant, kidney tonic.

Note: Cat's claw has been used for centuries in the Amazon to prevent pregnancies and help women recover from childbirth, and is not recommended for use with pregnant animals. Cat's claw may lower blood pressure, and should not be used before surgery or in recovery.



Also known as *Una de gato*, cat's claw is a long woody vine with claw-shaped thorns that is native to the Amazon. It has gained popularity throughout the West as a potent immuno-stimulant. Considered a "helper herb" by the shamans of the Ashaninka, Aguaruna, Cashibo, Conibo, Shipibo and Yanesha Tribes, it is used to not only heal the body, but also to strengthen the spiritual and mental aspects of those who take it. This vigorous, 100-foot vine has been used by tribal herbalists for 2,000 years to fight bacterial infections, and has been researched extensively in the US since the 1970s, in cancer, Alzheimer's and arthritis clinical trials.

IMMUNE BOOSTING PROPERTIES

Cat's claw reboots the immune system to regulate white blood cell production and performance. If white blood cell counts are high, it will help lower them so they don't damage healthy cells; but if levels are low, it will raise them. In laboratory studies, cat's claw increased the ability of white blood cells to find and eradicate foreign micro-organisms. It also increases the body's production of T-cells, helping to fight infection more effectively. Early studies indicate that cat's claw has positive effects on viral and parasitic infections such as Lyme disease, when used in conjunction with conventional therapies.

ANTI-INFLAMMATORY AND ANTIBACTERIAL BENEFITS

This herb can be useful in treating chronic inflammatory conditions of the bowel, kidneys and bladder, especially if they stem from a bacterial infection. It inhibits harmful bacterial and fungal growth, while detoxifying the organs and encouraging the growth of beneficial bacteria. You can make a strong sterile tea from cat's claw to use as a wash for external wounds, or use the tea as a base for medicinal hoof soaks to treat abscesses and thrush.

The alkaloids and quinic acid esters found in cat's claw are anti-inflammatory and useful in the treatment of various types of arthritis. Rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis have received particular attention in clinical trials, in which regular daily doses of cat's claw led to significant decreases in joint swelling and pain within one to two weeks. Extended trials monitoring usage over six to twelve months showed increasing cumulative benefits and effects.

Cat's claw is extremely high in antioxidants, which encourage healthy cell division and can accelerate DNA repair. It has been documented to cause certain cancers, including leukemia, to go into remission in both humans and animals. It is certainly worth further investigation. 

Maya Cointreau has two decades of experience in the holistic healing field. She is an herbalist, energy healer and co-founder of Earth Lodge, a company serving equines for over 15 years. She has written several books on alternative healing, including *The Comprehensive Guide to Vibrational Healing, Natural Animal Healing* and *Equine Herbs & Healing*. You can find these books and more information at EarthLodgeBooks.com.