



Red Clover:

A potent drug growing under your feet!

by Sue Visser

Please note: This information is not intended as medical advice. Please consult your doctor. Any herb or remedy is taken at your own risk. Make sure it is safe for you. You are responsible for your own health and safety.

What is Red Clover and where does it come from?

Red Clover belongs to a family of leguminous three leaf clovers that grow on just about any field, sidewalk or lawn in our country. The red and white clovers have distinctive pom-pom shaped heads of flowers and a V-shaped white stripe on the leaves. Both the red and white clovers contain a special combination of phyto-chemicals that are very useful to us medicinally.

What are the general uses of Red Clover?

Traditionally Herbalists and Homeopaths use this herb in many ways: a remedy for spasmodic and bronchial coughs, for alleviation of cysts and ulcers and for bad cases of acne. It is alleged to have sedative, depurative, alterative and detergent properties. In other words, a drug that restores health, relaxes us and eliminates impurities. Red clover has even been used successfully to treat some types of cancer. All this, growing under our feet- and we pull them out as weeds!

Red Clover in modern medicine? Tell us more:

Apart from anti-oxidants, the leaves contain a high concentration of four very special chemical compounds called isoflavones. Recent discoveries relating to adverse symptoms of the menopause indicate the need for more isoflavones: substances that exert a modifying effect on estrogen receptors, known as: selective estrogen receptor modulators, or SERMS. In cases of breast, uterine or prostate cancer that are aggravated by anabolic steroids, eg: estrogen, progesterone and testosterone, one needs to block the regenerative effects of these hormones on cell receptors when cell mutation has caused tumorous growths. Estrogen blocking drugs like Tamoxifen are used for this purpose. The natural alternative? Isoflavones: natural substances with a weak estrogenic effect. Red Clover contains four isoflavones: genistein, daidzein, formononetin and biochanin as opposed to the two found in soya, namely genistein and daidzein. Consumed as a food, at least 50g of soya has to be eaten daily. Some people do not tolerate soya - so it's red clover to the rescue!

Are there adverse or dangerous side effects associated with Red Clover?

According to extensive trials done overseas on red clover tablets, the good news is no. No weight gain, breakthrough bleeding, endometrial thickening or changes in FSH (FOLLICLE STIMULATING HORMONE) levels. (NOVOGEN trials. Contact: W Buys 082 4502062)

Apart from the SERMS effect, what are the other advantages of red clover?

Reduction of hot flushes and night sweats in women, reversal of bone resorption (bone density improved - over 4% a year), the alleviation of symptoms of estrogen dominance like: cancer threats, weight gain, bloating, sore, swollen breasts, headaches, blood clotting and menstrual discomfort.

How do I take red clover?

If you can find the plant growing and identify it, pick the leaves and chew one or two daily. Some people buy the dried herb from health shops and make a pleasant tea but this is mainly made from the flowers. Tinctures can be obtained from dried leaves soaked in vodka and you can take a few drops at a time. (The isoflavones are absorbed directly into the bloodstream and alleviate a hot flush within minutes for some lucky

ladies.) Novogen tablets are also available at a pharmacy or they can be prescribed by your doctor. Taking tablets is expensive and it takes time for all the benefits to show, but the daily dose of 40mg - 120mg per day is accurate and the results are reliable. You can try slowly chewing the tablet (they taste awful!) but the active isoflavones will then be absorbed in the mouth tissues and be made available to the bloodstream. Nature Fresh tinctures have been successfully used for the immediate relief of hot flushes. Remember that hot flushes are also due to low blood sugar, adrenal stress or are side effects of the body trying to fight off an infection.

For more information about hormonal problems and vaginal disorders, consult: www.naturefresh.co.za

How about men with prostate cancer?

Men with benign prostate hypertrophy (BPH) can benefit from Red Clover supplements, especially combined with Saw Palmetto that has a well known shrinking effect on this tissue. The Red Clover prevents further tumour growth. Be careful with sex tonics or stress boosters containing herbs with an anabolic or testosterone-like effect, or worse still: an estrogenic effect on any potential tumour sites. Consult a nutritional expert with regards to vitamins and minerals, especially zinc supplements.

Do any herbs exert estrogenic effects?

Yes, definitely. The herb: fennel for instance. Just chewing some fennel seeds in the mouth sends estrogenic messages darting all over the body, as men and women have estrogen receptors everywhere, even in the brain and bowels. This herb is useful in an emergency to relieve gas and bloating or to stop a profuse menstrual bleed as it helps to clot the blood and is a useful alternative to estrogen supplements. Sage helps with hot flushes.

For more information on Health Problems go to www.naturefresh.co.za. Free community service.

