

Herb Action Glossary

Definitions of the Actions of Herbs

abortifacient - inducing abortion

adaptogen - substances which put the body into a state of non-specific heightened resistance in order to better resist stress + adapt to extraordinary challenges

adjuvant - aiding the action of a medicinal agent

alternative - known as blood cleansers as they improve lymphatic circulation, boost immunity + clear chronic conditions by eliminating metabolic toxins (syn: depurative)

analeptic - restorative or stimulating effect on central nervous system

analgesic - relieves pain (syn: anodynes)

anaphrodisiac - reduces capacity for sexual arousal

anesthetic - induces loss of sensation or consciousness due to the depression of nerve function

antianemic - preventing or curing anemia

antibacterial - destroying or stopping the growth of bacteria

antibilious - easing stomach stress

anti catarrhal - reduces inflamed mucous membranes of head and throat

anticoagulant - prevents or dissolves blood clots

antidepressant - therapy that acts to prevent, or alleviate mental depression

antidiabetic - preventing or relieving diabetes

antidiarrhetic- substances use to prevent or treat diarrhea

antiemetic - stopping vomiting

antifungal - destroying or inhibiting the growth of fungus

antihemorrhagic - controlling hemorrhaging or bleeding

anti-infectious - counteracting infection, internal or manifested externally

anti-inflammatory - controlling inflammation, a reaction to injury or infection

antimalarial - preventing or relieving malaria

antimicrobial - destructive to microbes

antioxidant - prevents or inhibits oxidation



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antipruritic - preventing or relieving itching

antipyretic - agent that reduces fever (syn: febrifuge)

antirheumatic - easing pain of rheumatism, inflammation of joints and muscles

antiseptic - agent used to produce asepsis and to remove pus, blood, etc.

antispasmodic - calming nervous and muscular spasms or convulsions

antitussive - controlling or preventing cough

antiviral - opposing the action of a virus

aperient - a very mild laxative

aperitive - stimulating the appetite for food

aphrodisiac - substance increasing capacity for sexual arousal

asepsis - sterile, a condition free of germs, infection, and any form of life

astringent - agent that is drying, drawing, and constricting to help create a barrier for healing by coagulation of proteins a cell surface

bitter - stimulates appetite or digestive function

cardiotonic - increases strength and tone (normal tension or response to stimuli) of the heart

carminative - causing the release of stomach or intestinal gas

catarrhal - pertaining to the inflammation of mucous membranes of the head and throat

cathartic - an active purgative, producing bowel movements

cholagogue - an agent that increases flow of bile from gallbladder

cicatrizant - aiding formation of scar-tissue and healing wounds

counterirritant - agent producing an inflammatory response for affecting an adjacent area

demulcent - soothing action on inflammation, especially of mucous membranes

dermatitis - inflammation of the skin evidenced my itchiness, redness, and various lesions

diaphoretic - increases perspiration (syn: sudorific)

discutient - useful in dissolving abnormal growths and tumors

diuretic - increases urine flow



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dysmenorrhea - painful menstruation

dyspepsia - imperfect or painful digestion

ecbolic - tends to increase contractions of uterus, facilitating childbirth

emetic - produces vomiting

emmenagogue - agent that regulates and induces normal menstruation

emollient - softens and soothes the skin

errhine - bringing on sneezing, increasing flow of mucus in nasal passages

escharotic - a caustic substance that destroys tissue and causes sloughing

estrogenic - causes the production of estrogen

euphoriant - produces a sense of bodily comfort; temporary effect and often addictive

expectorant - facilitates removal of secretions

febrifuge - an agent that reduces or relieves a fever

flatulence - excessive gas in the stomach or intestine

galactagogue - an agent that promotes the flow of milk (syn: galactogenic)

hemagogue - an agent that promotes the flow of blood

hemostatic - controls the flow or stops the flow of blood

hepatic - having to do with the liver

herpetic - treating skin eruptions relating to the herpes virus

hypertensive - raises blood pressure

hypoglycemic - an agent that lowers blood sugar

hypotensive - lowers blood pressure

immunosuppressant - reduces immune system activity, particularly for overactive immune system or autoimmune diseases

immunostimulant - strengthen and stimulate the immune system (syn: immune enhancing/Immune stimulant)

lactifuge - reduces the flow of milk



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laxative - substance that acts to loosen the bowels contents

masticatory - increases flow of saliva upon chewing

narcotic - induces drowsiness, sleep, or stupor and lessens pain

nervine - soothing and calming to the nervous system (syn: nerve tonic, relaxant)

neuralgia - severe sharp pain along the course of a nerve

nutritive - rich in vitamins and minerals; they provide a source of easily assimilated nutrients

oxytocic - stimulate uterine contractions and promote and assist in childbirth

parturfaciant - induces contractions of labor at childbirth

pectoral - enhance and are beneficial for the respiratory system

purgative - laxative, causes the evacuation of intestinal contents

resorbent - aids reabsorption of blood from bruises

rheumatism - a general term for acute or chronic conditions characterized by inflammation of the muscles and joints (includes arthritis, gout, bursitis, myositis, and fibromyositis)

rubefacient - agent which reddens skin, dilates the vessels, and increases blood supply locally

sedative - exerts a soothing, tranquilizing effect on the body

sialagogue - stimulate the secretion of saliva, promoting the digestion of starch

soporific - inducing sleep

stimulant - temporarily increases body or organ function

stomachic - aids the stomach and digestion action

sudorific - acts to increase perspiration

tonic - a substance that increases strength and tone

vasoconstrictor - constricting on the blood vessels, reduce blood flow

vasodilator - expand and relax the blood vessels, increase blood flow

vulnerary - promote wound healing by stimulating cell growth with their antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties



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