



False Unicorn

Stock #267-1 (100 capsules)

False unicorn (*Chamaelirium luteum*) is a popular herbal remedy among both American herbalists and British phytotherapists. According to the *British Herbal Compendium*, false unicorn is regarded as an ovarian and uterine tonic and natural treatment for a variety of menstrual disorders—it is said to strengthen and tone the uterus and the entire reproductive system. False unicorn is best-known for correcting menstrual problems such as amenorrhea (absent or suppressed menstruation), dysmenorrhea (painful menstruation), menorrhagia (abnormally heavy or long menstruation), PMS and menopausal symptoms, and for its ability to correct infertility and help prevent miscarriage.¹⁻⁷

False unicorn is a bitter herb that provides astringent, diuretic, anthelmintic (expel or destroy parasitic intestinal worms) and oxytocic (stimulate uterine contractions) effects. Chemical analysis indicates that false unicorn contains a mixture of steroidal saponins, including the hormone precursor diosgenin. These steroidal compounds are believed to

stimulate the uterus and may help explain why folk literature associates false unicorn with reproductive complaints such as amenorrhea and dysmenorrhea. The presence of plant steroids may also be responsible for false unicorn's effect on liver dysfunction and its stimulating, tonic action on genitourinary weakness. Unfortunately, there is no scientific data available at this time to support these reported effects.¹⁻⁸

Nevertheless, false unicorn is still employed for a variety of female health concerns. For example, false unicorn is recommended for functional secondary amenorrhea—absence of menses for 6 months or for longer than three of the patient's normal menstrual cycles—to help correct hormonal imbalance caused by malfunction of the hypothalamus. False unicorn is also indicated for menorrhagia—excessively profuse or prolonged bleeding occurring with a normal menstrual cycle. In addition, false unicorn may be beneficial in the treatment of early stages of cervical dysplasia, as well as pelvic inflammatory disease—infection of the uterus, fallopian tubes and adjacent pelvic structures, also known as chronic salpingitis.^{3,9-11}

As a uterine tonic, false unicorn may be helpful when there is difficulty conceiving. Uterine tonics are used to improve the health and condition of the uterine tissue, strengthening and nourishing the glandular lining that forms each month, since healthy tone to the uterine wall is important in order for the fetus to attach. False unicorn may help correct difficulty conceiving due to such conditions as excessive anovulatory cycles (menstruation without the release of an ovum), cervical mucus that is too viscous (resistant to flow), pelvic congestion (typically experienced as a sensation of heaviness) or altered hypothalamic-pituitary hormone secretion and release (which can disrupt or prevent ovulation). Furthermore, although there is some reluctance to recommend herbs in pregnancy, there are several herbs invaluable for the treatment of certain common problems of pregnancy. In fact, false unicorn is regarded as a key herb for threatened miscarriage and menstrual bleeding due to uterine weakness, when administered under the supervision of a qualified practitioner—some midwives and obstetricians recommend that women at risk for miscarriage use certain herbs such as false unicorn for several months before attempting to conceive, in order to improve uterine tone and hormonal regulation.^{3,9,10,12}

In addition, false unicorn is often given several weeks after childbirth, miscarriage, pelvic infections or surgery in order to tone the uterus. False unicorn may also be recommended as a supportive tonic following a hysterectomy and for the treatment of menopausal symptoms stemming from altered hormone levels. False unicorn supports oestrogen function in the body and appears to alleviate symptoms of oestrogen withdrawal in the postmenopausal woman. These effects may be due to the presence of steroidal saponins such as diosgenin in the herb. While diosgenin has exhibited estrogenic action in animal studies, it is also possible that plant steroids bind to vacant oestrogen receptors in the hypothalamus, convincing the body that more oestrogen is present in the bloodstream than actually is. Furthermore, due to the oestrogen-promoting effects of false unicorn, it may prove beneficial for treating fibroadenoma—a benign tumor commonly occurring in breast tissue.^{7,9,13}

According to the *Physician's Desk Reference for Herbal Medicines*, no health hazards or side effects are known for false unicorn when used in conjunction with proper administration of designated therapeutic dosages. There is a possibility of gastric complaint and vomiting, due to false unicorn's high saponin content, particularly in cases of overdosage. Women with endometriosis or uterine myoma (fibroids) should not use false unicorn, due to the herb's oestrogen-promoting effects. False unicorn is also not recommended during pregnancy, due to the herb's oxytocic effects. However, false unicorn may be used, under the care and supervision of a qualified practitioner, during the third trimester of pregnancy in order to facilitate an easier delivery and quicker recovery, especially in women with difficult or prolonged labor.^{2,3,5,8-10}

References:

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