

Cambrella Road map

When to consult a doctor about the use of herbs?

There are special groups of patients who should consult their doctor or pharmacist about the use of herbs. First of all, pregnant women and nursing mothers, children, but also elderly people with systemic diseases and patients with active neoplastic disease should be mentioned. It is also worth signaling if we are taking a drug or several drugs on a permanent basis.

How do we know herbs have healing properties?

Herbal medicines are one of the best-studied specifics. Basic information about their operation is derived mainly from folk medicine. We get more information from clinical trials, because like any drug, herbal medicine must be properly tested and have a documented effect. An interesting fact is that it happens that during these studies we discover new, so far undiscovered, beneficial properties of the preparation influencing relatively "new" diseases of our time (allergies, depression, cancer).



What conditions must a "herb" / "herbal product" meet to have healing properties? A significant problem of herbal medicine, which practically does not occur in the case of a synthetic drug, is the achievement of dose repeatability, which is important for the safety and effectiveness of the therapy. The amount of active substances in the raw material is influenced by many factors, i.e. the variety used, growing conditions (e.g. sunlight, soil), harvesting site (wild, plantation), and even the time of harvest and drying method. Therefore, to ensure the appropriate quality of herbal medicine, the principles of good practice and standardization have been introduced.

The best form of quality control is the establishment of contractual controlled crops. The grower receives the seed material, cultivation instructions from the recipient of the herbs and is obliged to document each stage. In this way, we obtain a similar set of active compounds in the plant raw material and in similar amounts. Standardization, on the other hand, is to verify that this is actually the case. It includes checking i.a. the appearance of the raw material (external and under a microscope), testing the level of impurities, testing the content of active ingredients. It is best if the material complies with pharmacopoeial standards, as these are considered a very good quality indicator.

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If, among all the chemical compounds contained in a given plant, one of them is present in a predominant amount and has a very significant impact on the effect, then the whole raw material will most often be standardized on its content. The packaging of such a herbal medicine should contain information on both parameters, i.e. the content of the raw material and the amount of the chemical compound contained in it. Another quantity on the basis of which we can conclude about the potency of a given herbal drug is the Drug Extract Ratio (DER). It tells about the amount of dried herb subjected to extraction in relation to the amount of extract obtained. For example, a value of 50: 1 means that 50 parts (e.g. mg) of dried raw material was used to produce 1 part (mg) of extract, i.e. the higher the DER value, the better.



Medicinal plants contain a unique blend of active ingredients with a multidirectional, often complementary effect. Despite the development of technology, it happens that we are not able to determine the chemical structure of the compound responsible for the operation in a given raw material. Sometimes it is impossible to isolate the active substance due to costs or low stability of the compound. Until now, new species of plants, especially tropical ones, with healing properties are being discovered. They can be a response to the current medical problems of our world, including civilization diseases, growing resistance to antibiotics or antimalarial drugs. These arguments speak in favor of herbal medicine. By using herbs and their preparations in a reasonable way, we undergo a unique therapy that brings many benefits with minimal risk.