

Supplement Sampler

Butterbur (*Petasites hybridus*)

Best Indications

Seasonal Allergies (Allergic Rhinitis)
Headache Prevention



Mechanism of Action

Butterbur is a broad leafed plant that was used to wrap butter prior to refrigeration. It has anti-spasmodic properties and reduces the synthesis of leukotrienes and histamines. This mechanism helps to stabilize mast cells. One mechanism by which it may benefit headaches is through its anti-inflammatory properties.

Best Studies

Allergic Rhinitis: 125 patients with seasonal allergic rhinitis were randomized to receive butterbur or cetirizine (*Zyrtec*) in a double blinded study. The butterbur was given four times a day and the cetirizine was given once daily. The two therapies had similar benefit after two weeks of therapy, but the butterbur had significantly less sedating side effects. (*Schapowal A. Petasites Study Group. Randomised controlled trial of butterbur and cetirizine for treating seasonal allergic rhinitis. BMJ 2002;324:144-6.*)

Migraine Headaches Prevention: 245 patients with regular migraines were randomized to receive Petasites extract 75 mg bid, Petasites extract 50 mg bid, or placebo bid for four months. The 75 mg dose was most effective and reduced the frequency of headaches by 48% compared to 26% with placebo. The 50 mg dose reduced them by 36%. The most common side effect was mild GI symptoms, mainly burping. (*Lipton RB, Gobel H, Einhaupl KM, et al. Petasites hybridus root (butterbur) is an effective preventive treatment for migraine. Neurology 2004;63:2240-4.*)

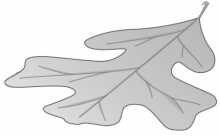
This also appears to be safe in children and adolescents. Of 108 patients (ages 6-17), there was a reduction in attack frequency by 68% in those treated with butterbur. (*Pothmann R, Danesch U. Migraine Prevention in Children and Adolescents: Results of an Open Study With a Special Butterbur Root Extract. Headache 2005;45:196-203.*)

Dose

Children (6-9 yrs old) 25 mg bid, (9-13 yrs old) 50 mg bid of Petasites extract for headache prevention.

Adults 75-150 mg bid of Petasites extract for Headache prevention and qid dosing for allergic rhinitis.

The research on headaches used a pyrrolizidine alkaloid free butterbur rhizome extract standardized to 15% petasin and isopetasin called *Petadolex* (Weber & Weber, GmbH & Co, Germany).



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Side Effects

The main concern is the hepatotoxic pyrrolizidine alkaloid (PA) content that is found in the root. It is recommended that patients use a preparation where this has been removed (Such as the *Petadolex*). Otherwise the side effects are mild and mainly consist of abdominal discomfort and belching.

Cost

Petadolex costs around \$35-\$45 for 50, 50 mg capsules.

Disclaimer

The health benefits from multi-colored whole food eaten with a smile with family and friends significantly trumps any product found in a bottle, be it a supplement or drug!

Brought to you by your colleagues in the UW Department of Family Medicine Integrative Medicine Program.

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