

# herbs at a glance

## Sage



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This fact sheet provides basic information about sage—common names, what the science says, potential side effects and cautions, and resources for more information.

**Common Names**—black sage, broad-leaved sage, common sage

**Latin Names**—*Salvia officinalis*, *Salvia lavandulaefolia*, *Salvia lavandulifolia*

Sage has been used for centuries as a spice and seasoning in cooking and as a folk or traditional remedy for hoarseness, coughs, and sore mouths and throats. In ancient times it even was thought to extend life. Sage was used as a fertility drug in ancient Egypt. Physicians in ancient Greece used a solution of sage and water to stop wounds from bleeding and to clean sores and ulcers.

Today, sage is used as a folk or traditional remedy for mouth and throat inflammation, indigestion, and excessive sweating; to improve mood; and to boost memory or mental performance.

Sage is available as dried leaves, liquid extracts and sprays, and essential oils.

### What the Science Says

- Sage has not been well studied as a treatment for sore throat, so there is little scientific evidence to support its use for that ailment.
- Two small studies suggest that sage may improve mood and mental performance in healthy young people and memory and attention in older adults. Results of another small clinical study suggest that a sage extract was better than placebo at enhancing thinking and learning in older adults with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease.
- Laboratory studies suggest that essential oils from sage may have antimicrobial properties.

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## Side Effects and Cautions

- Sage is generally regarded as safe by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and is approved for food use as a spice or seasoning. However, some species of sage contain thujone, which can affect the nervous system. Extended use or taking large amounts of sage leaf or oil may result in restlessness, vomiting, vertigo, rapid heart rate, tremors, seizures, and kidney damage. It also may lead to wheezing. Ingesting 12 drops or more of the essential oil is considered a toxic dose.
- Drug interactions with sage have not been thoroughly studied.
- Sage can stimulate allergic or hypersensitivity reactions. Skin contact may result in inflammation. Ingesting sage powder or dust may cause breathing difficulties.
- Tell all your health care providers about any complementary health practices you use. Give them a full picture of what you do to manage your health. This will help ensure coordinated and safe care. For tips about talking with your health care providers about complementary and alternative medicine, see NCCAM's Time to Talk campaign at [nccam.nih.gov/timetotalk/](http://nccam.nih.gov/timetotalk/).

## Sources

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## For More Information

Visit the NCCAM Web site at [nccam.nih.gov](http://nccam.nih.gov) and view *Using Dietary Supplements Wisely* ([nccam.nih.gov/health/supplements/wiseuse.htm](http://nccam.nih.gov/health/supplements/wiseuse.htm)).

## NCCAM Clearinghouse

Toll-free in the U.S.: 1-888-644-6226  
TTY (for deaf and hard-of-hearing callers): 1-866-464-3615  
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## NIH Office of Dietary Supplements

Web site: [www.ods.od.nih.gov](http://www.ods.od.nih.gov)

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