

herbs at a glance

Hoodia



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

Common Names—hoodia, Kalahari cactus, Xhoba

Latin Name—*Hoodia gordonii*

Hoodia is a flowering, cactus-like plant native to the Kalahari Desert in southern Africa. Its harvest is protected by conservation laws. Historically, Kalahari Bushmen ate hoodia stems to reduce their hunger and thirst during long hunts. Today, the main folk use of hoodia is as an appetite suppressant for weight loss.

Dried extracts of hoodia stems and roots are used to make capsules, powders, and chewable tablets. Hoodia can also be used to make liquid extracts and teas. Hoodia products often contain other herbs or minerals, such as green tea or chromium picolinate.

What the Science Says

There is no reliable scientific evidence to support hoodia's use. No studies of the herb in people have been published.

Side Effects and Cautions

- Hoodia's safety is unknown. Its potential risks, side effects, and interactions with medicines and other supplements have not been studied.
- The quality of hoodia products varies widely. News reports suggest that some products sold as hoodia do not contain any hoodia.
- 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/.

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Sources

Hoodia. Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database Web site. Accessed at www.naturaldatabase.com on July 15, 2009.

Hoodia (*Hoodia gordonii*). Natural Standard Database Web site. Accessed at www.naturalstandard.com on July 15, 2009.

For More Information

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

NCCAM Clearinghouse

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