

# herbs at a glance

## Feverfew



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

**Common Names**—feverfew, bachelor's buttons, featherfew

**Latin Names**—*Tanacetum parthenium*, *Chrysanthemum parthenium*

Originally a plant native to the Balkan mountains of Eastern Europe, feverfew—a short bush with daisy-like flowers—now grows throughout Europe, North America, and South America. For centuries, traditional uses of feverfew have included fevers, headaches, stomach aches, toothaches, insect bites, infertility, and problems with menstruation and with labor during childbirth. Newer folk or traditional uses for feverfew include migraine headaches, rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis, allergies, asthma, tinnitus (ringing or roaring sounds in the ears), dizziness, nausea, and vomiting.

The dried leaves—and sometimes flowers and stems—of feverfew are used to make supplements, including capsules, tablets, and liquid extracts. The leaves are sometimes eaten fresh.

### What the Science Says

- Some research suggests that feverfew may be helpful in preventing migraine headaches; however, results have been mixed and more evidence is needed from well-designed studies.
- One study found that feverfew did not reduce rheumatoid arthritis symptoms in women whose symptoms did not respond to conventional medicines. It has been suggested that feverfew could help those with milder symptoms.
- There is not enough evidence available to assess whether feverfew is beneficial for other uses.
- NCCAM-funded researchers have studied ways to standardize feverfew; that is, to prepare it in a consistent manner. Standardized preparations can be used in future studies of feverfew.

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## Side Effects and Cautions

- No serious side effects have been reported for feverfew. Side effects can include canker sores, swelling and irritation of the lips and tongue, and loss of taste.
- Less common side effects can include nausea, digestive problems, and bloating.
- People who take feverfew for a long time and then stop taking it may have difficulty sleeping, headaches, joint pain, nervousness, and stiff muscles.
- Women who are pregnant should not use feverfew because it may cause the uterus to contract, increasing the risk of miscarriage or premature delivery.
- People can have allergic reactions to feverfew. Those who are allergic to other members of the daisy family (which includes ragweed and chrysanthemums) are more likely to be allergic to feverfew.
- 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

E-mail: [info@nccam.nih.gov](mailto:info@nccam.nih.gov)

## PubMed®

Web site: [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez)

## NIH Office of Dietary Supplements

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

## NIH National Library of Medicine's MedlinePlus

Feverfew Listing: [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/933.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/933.html)

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