

# herbs at a glance

## Dandelion



© Steven Foster

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

**Common Names**—dandelion, lion’s tooth, blowball

**Latin Name**—*Taraxacum officinale*

Dandelion greens are edible and are a rich source of vitamin A. Dandelion has been used in many traditional medical systems, including Native American and traditional Arabic medicine. Historically, dandelion was most commonly used to treat liver diseases, kidney diseases, and spleen problems. Less commonly, dandelion was used to treat digestive problems and skin conditions. Today, traditional or folk uses of dandelion include use as a liver or kidney “tonic,” as a diuretic, and for minor digestive problems.

The leaves and roots of the dandelion, or the whole plant, are used fresh or dried in teas, capsules, or extracts. Dandelion leaves are used in salads or as a cooked green, and the flowers are used to make wine.

### What the Science Says

There is no compelling scientific evidence for using dandelion as a treatment for any medical condition.

### Side Effects and Cautions

- Dandelion use is generally considered safe. However, there have been rare reports of upset stomach and diarrhea, and some people are allergic to the plant.
- People with an inflamed or infected gallbladder, or blocked bile ducts, should avoid using dandelion.
- 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/).

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND HUMAN SERVICES  
National Institutes of Health  
National Center for Complementary  
and Alternative Medicine



NCCAM

## Sources

Dandelion. Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database Web site. Accessed at [www.naturaldatabase.com](http://www.naturaldatabase.com) on June 9, 2009.

Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*). Natural Standard Database Web site. Accessed at [www.naturalstandard.com](http://www.naturalstandard.com) on June 9, 2009.

Dandelion root with herb. In: Blumenthal M, Goldberg A, Brinckman J, eds. *Herbal Medicine: Expanded Commission E Monographs*. Newton, MA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 2000:359-366.

## 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

Dandelion Listing: [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/706.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/706.html)

*This publication is not copyrighted and is in the public domain. Duplication is encouraged.*

NCCAM has provided this material for your information. It is not intended to substitute for the medical expertise and advice of your primary health care provider. We encourage you to discuss any decisions about treatment or care with your health care provider. The mention of any product, service, or therapy is not an endorsement by NCCAM.

National Institutes of Health



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services