

The Medicinal Herb with a Reputation of Curing Fever

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With growing appreciation of traditional remedies and healing herbs, several plants are increasingly being used for therapeutic benefits. Among them is Giloe, also known as Guduchi (in Sanskrit, plant that protects from diseases), which is earning a reputation as a popular remedy for viral fever.

Giloe is one of the most famous medicinal plants used in treatment of large number of human ailments in Ayurveda. In the wake of the current epidemic of viral fevers and dengue, its use seems relevant and worth exploring. Giloe, interestingly, has been reported to help treat dengue in the early stages without any side-effects: It has been reported to increase the platelets in a significant manner and lower the body temperature.

Giloe, known as Rasayana plant in Ayurveda, has been reported to enhance general body resistance and promote longevity. The ancient Indian physician, Charaka, described rasayana as a plant that has anti-ageing properties, increases the life span, promotes intelligence, improving memory and freedom, indicating an immune-stimulating effect. It has also been reported to have anti-stress and adaptogenic properties.

Native to India, South East Asia and Africa, various parts of the plant (leaves, roots, stem, bark and fruit) are used, each with distinct benefits. Nutritionally, Giloe is high in fibre, potassium and chromium, a good source of proteins, carbohydrates, iron and calcium.

Several bio-active components like alkaloids, flavanoids, tannins and plant steroids have been isolated from different parts of the plant, which all contribute to its high antioxidant status and curative properties. These components have also been reported to play an important role in blood glucose regulation, anti-diabetic potential, cholesterol lowering, osteoporosis and arthritis.

A study published in the Indian Journal of Medical Sciences in 2007, reported significant improvement in healing of wounds and foot ulcers in 50 diabetic patients, who had been accessed for a period of 18 months. Giloe has also been reported to be useful in reducing the side-effects of chemotherapy. An animal study conducted in 2003 reported a protective effect of the plant, when exposed to gamma radiations.

As the long-term use of herbal medicines has not been well established and their use is not regulated by the US FDA (Food and Drug Administration), these must be administered under professional supervision and guidance. In addition, pregnant and nursing mothers should not take herbal medicines.

A word of caution for specially for those suffering from auto-immune diseases and taking immune-suppressants, as Giloe is an immune-stimulant, it may interfere with medications that suppress the actions of immune system. Giloe may increase the immune response in autoimmune diseases such as multiple sclerosis, lupus or rheumatoid arthritis, which could be counter-productive.

While, in the last few decades, remarkable research has been done on the biological activity and possible application of Giloe to combat various diseases, large scale studies and research should be undertaken. This would help to identify more information and include standardisation of various parts and sub-parts for specific outcomes and even drug development. Meanwhile, consult with a qualified professional or doctor to utilise the benefits of this amazing plant safely.