

Herbal Actions: A Guide to the Language of Herbalism

IMMUNE SYSTEM

Adaptogens — increase the body's ability to respond to non-specific stress

Surface immune activators — increase defensive capabilities of mucous membranes

Deep immune activators — stimulates bone marrow to produce blood cells, phagocytes and other pathogen fighting cells

Anti-allergic! Anti-histamine - reduce the histamine and other chemical responses to irritants

Anti-bacterial — increases immune response to bacteria

Anti-viral — increases immune response to viruses

Anti-microbial — increases immune response to microbes

Anti-fungal — increases immune response to fungal agents

NERVOUS SYSTEM

Adaptogen — increases the body's ability to respond to non-specific stress

Adrenal tonics — reduce hyperactivity of "fight or flight" reflex by strengthening the adrenals

Analgesic — diminishes pain without affecting consciousness

Anti-spasmodic! Spasmolytic — relaxes spasm of the muscles or stops convulsions

Relaxing nervine — relaxes and calms the nervous system

Stimulating nervine — stimulates central nervous system

Sedative — slows respiration and circulation to reduce nervousness and anxiety

Hypnotic — causes extreme drowsiness, relaxation and usually sleep

Nervine tonic — regenerates damaged nerve tissues, nourishes nervous system

ENDOCRINE SYSTEM

Alterative — blood purifier that works by increasing efficiency of lymph, liver and kidneys in cleaning up cellular wastes in the blood stream

Bitter — triggers the bitter reflex and causes the glands to secrete, stimulates all aspects of digestion

Hormonal balancer — regulates the production of hormones

Sialogogue — stimulates the secretion of the salivary glands

DIGESTIVE SYSTEM

Astringent/Styptic — reduces secretions and or bleeding

Anti-helminthic/ Vermifuge — purges worms and parasites

Anti-emetic — stops or prevents vomiting

Aromatic/ Stomachic — stimulates digestion because of the presence of volatile oils

Bitter — triggers bitter reflex which stimulates digestion

Carminative — dispels gas and increases the efficiency of digestion

Cathartic/Purgative — causes a dramatic evacuation of the bowels

Cholagogue — stimulates the liver and gall bladder, increases flow of bile

Demulcent — soothes and heals mucous membranes

Emetic — induces vomiting

Hepatic — tones and strengthens the liver

Laxative – stimulates evacuation of the bowels via stimulation of the peristaltic muscles, but more gently than a cathartic. Also may help move stool by moistening the fecal matter
Stomachic – soothes and aids digestion, most culinary herbs

REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM

Abortifacient – induces miscarriage or abortion
Emmenagogue – brings on menses, increase flow of menses
Galactagogue – promotes milk production and increases let down of milk
Hormonal normalizers – regulates hormone production
Oxytocic – stimulates uterine contractions via effect of oxytocin, speeds labor
Uterine tonics – strengthens the tone and functioning of the uterus
Parturient – encourages the onset of labor
Styptic/Anti-hemorrhagic – stops excessive bleeding

RESPIRATORY SYSTEM

Anti-catarhal – reduces excessive mucous production
Demulcent – soothes irritated mucosal membranes
Anti-histamine – reduces the allergic reaction of mucosal membranes
Expectorant – loosens phlegm and encourages its elimination from the lungs
Anti-tussive – reduces the cough reflex

SKIN

Alterative – blood purifier (see above in endocrine system)
Diaphoretic – induces sweating
Anti-hidrotic – prevents sweating
Emollient – softens and soothes skin
Styptic – stops bleeding via constriction of the capillaries
Vulnerary – promotes healing by increasing cellular regeneration
Rubefacient – increases the circulation to an area of bruising or injury by irritating the skin

CARDIOVASCULAR SYSTEM

Anti-spasmodic – relaxes muscular spasm (thus aiding the heart muscle and also reducing hypertonic vascular tissues)
Cardiac tonic – tones and strengthens the heart
Diuretic – increases urine flow, reduce blood pressure by decreasing the volume of Fluid which the heart must circulate
Febrifuge/Refrigerant/Anti-Pyretic – reduces fever
Hypotensive – reduces blood pressure
Hypertensive – increases blood pressure
Circulatory stimulant – stimulates circulation and respiration
Styptic – stops blood flow and reduces secretions via capillary astriction
Peripheral vasodilator – widens peripheral blood vessels and capillaries, thus increasing circulation to the extremities
Peripheral vasoconstrictor – constricts peripheral blood vessels and capillaries, this

lowering the circulation to the extremities

Vascular tonic – tones blood vessels and increases flexibility of the vessel walls

Circulatory modulator – regulates the rhythm and action of the heart

URINARY SYSTEM

Anti-lithic – dissolves stones in the kidney (or gall stones)

Demulcent – soothes irritated tissues

Diuretic – stimulates the kidneys and increases urination

Astringent – tightens and tones tissues, reducing excessive secretions

MUSCULAR SKELETAL SYSTEM.

Anti-spasmodic/Spasmolytic – reduce muscular spasm and stops convulsions

Anti-inflammatory – reduces inflammation of tissues

Anodyne – relieves pain without affecting consciousness

Anti-rheumatics- reduces joint pain and inflammation