

SENNA PODS

(Senna alexandrina)

Clinical Summary

Actions

- Laxative

Indications

Constipation, conditions in which easy bowel evacuation with soft stools is desirable such as anal fissures, haemorrhoids, after colon and rectal surgery, for bowel clearance before X-ray examinations and before and after abdominal surgery.

Traditional Use

Senna pods have been used for their stimulating laxative effect in more severe cases of constipation.

Energetics

Cold, dry.

Constituents

Anthraquinone glycosides (sennosides A, B, C and D, aloe-emodin, rhein), mucilage, flavonoids (kaempferol derivatives), resins, volatile oils.

Use in Pregnancy

Possibly safe when used short-term orally and appropriately. Possibly unsafe when used orally long term or in high doses.

Contraindications and Cautions

Do not use for prolonged periods. Senna should not be used for more than one to two weeks. Excessive, or chronic use, or abuse may cause electrolyte imbalance including potassium deficiency, albuminuria (a condition of having too much protein in the urine which results from damage within the kidneys) and haematuria (blood in the urine). Adverse effects include diarrhoea, fluid loss, colic and possible hepatic reactions. Do not use in intestinal upsets including irritation, inflammations, diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting, intestinal obstruction and stenosis, atony, irritation of the bowel, inflammatory colon diseases, appendicitis, abdominal pain of unknown origin, severe dehydration states with water and electrolyte depletion or chronic constipation.

Drug Interactions

Caution with digoxin, diuretic drugs, oestrogens, stimulant laxatives and warfarin.

Administration and Dosage

Liquid extract 1:1 in 45% alcohol
10 to 40mL weekly