

ZIZYPHUS

(*Ziziphus jujuba* Mill.)

Clinical Summary

Actions

- Sedative
- Hypnotic
- Anxiolytic
- Hypotensive
- Relaxing nerve
- Antihydrotic

Indications

- Insomnia, anxiety, restlessness, irritability
- Excessive sweating, night sweats
- Heart palpitations, hypertension

Traditional Use

Zizyphus was originally described in the Shennong Herbal, the oldest Chinese materia medica book that has been used frequently by TCM doctors until present. It is notably effective in addressing restless sleep caused by a deficiency of heart and liver blood, making it a frequent prescription in TCM for various insomnia types. Due to its notable effects on sleep regulation it has earned the nickname 'sleeping fruit'.

Energetics

TCM Taste: weak sweet and sour; **temperature:** neutral; **channels entered:** heart, spleen, liver, stomach, gall bladder.

Constituents

Saponins, alkaloids, flavonoids, fatty acids, volatile oils, polysaccharides and several inorganic compounds.

Use in Pregnancy

The safety of zizyphus during pregnancy has not been definitively established in clinical research and animal studies are lacking. In Australia zizyphus has been classified in a number of herbal medicine texts as a Category B2 which means "Drugs which have been taken by only a limited number of pregnant women and women of childbearing age, without an increase in the frequency of malformation or other direct or indirect harmful effects on the human foetus having been observed. Studies in animals are inadequate or may be lacking, but available data show no evidence of an increased occurrence of foetal damage."

Contraindications and Cautions

In TCM the use of zizyphus seed is cautioned in patients with severe diarrhoea or excess heat.

Drug Interactions

Caution with the combined use of antidiabetic drugs due to theoretical additive effects such as increased risk of hypoglycaemia. The clinical significance is unclear, as these theories are based on animal research, but caution is advised until more data becomes available.

Caution with the combined use of central nervous system depressant drugs (such as benzodiazepines, barbiturates, certain sleep medicines and antihistamines some known as Valium, Xanax, Prozac, Rohypnol and Zolof) due to increased risks of sedative effects. This theoretical risk of increased sedation is based on animal studies.

Administration and Dosage

Liquid extract 1:2 in 30% alcohol
35 to 80mL weekly