

Catmint

Nepeta cataria



Catmint Benefits

Catmint (Nepeta cataria), also commonly referred to as catnip and catswort, is an herb well known for its popularity and effects on cats. However cats are not the only creatures that find benefit in this herb. The flowering tops of the catnip plant are used in a variety of ways to treat a number of different health conditions. From stomach issues, pest repellent, stress relief and even arthritis relief, catnip is a powerful and useful plant. Easy to grow in pretty much any climate or soil condition, catnip is a great plant to have on hand for its wealth of uses. Available and suitable to a variety of different means of administration, catmint is a versatile and safe natural remedy.

Active Ingredients

Rigorous scientific study on catmint has not been conducted, but according to the NYU Langone Medical Center, nepetalactone is the active ingredient thought to be responsible for the calming effect and stress relieving properties reported from the human consumption of catnip. This ingredient is also thought to be the reason catmint is so effective at treating stomach upset.

The University of Michigan notes that catmint also contains mucilage properties, which can help suppress coughs.

Catmint contains natural pest deterrents and the essential oil is sometimes used as an insect repellent.

Catmint Health Benefits

There are many reported health benefits and uses for catmint as an herbal supplement. Some of the uses include treatment for anxiety and insomnia. As noted above, it is often used as for its calming effects on the mind, body and even stomach. Many of its uses are stress relieving in some form or another.

Catmint is useful for a variety of digestive issues from stomach upset, diarrhea and gas. It may also help ease menstrual cramps.

Many use catmint for respiratory issues such as cough and congestion.

The anti-inflammatory properties of catmint also make it an effective folk treatment for arthritis, hemorrhoids and even to bring down the swelling associated with hives and bug bites.

How is Catmint Taken?

Catmint can be taken in a number of different ways. Essential oils of catnip are used as pest repellent and can be applied directly to the skin. To use catmint for its dermal anti-inflammatory properties, the essential oils are applied directly to the skin as a compress.

Catmint is also available in tablet form as an herbal supplement. It can be found at many health food or nutrition stores.

Tea is one of the more common ways catmint is taken. The flowering tops of the plant are steeped in water (unlike traditional tea, you do NOT want to put catnip in boiling water, bring the water to a boil and remove from heat for a minute before beginning the steeping process) and consumed like any other herbal tea.

Catmint and Drug Interactions

As with any herbal supplement, it is important to understand any potential reactions that can occur when taking catmint along with other medications. Catmint is generally recognized as safe to use in adults, but there are a few drugs that do not interact well with this herb.

Catmint can act as a diuretic in the body and should be used with caution by those taking lithium. Research shows that catnip can dramatically alter the way lithium is removed from the body. This can result in an increase of the amount of lithium in the body and as a result the dosage may need to be lowered to account for this change.

It is also advised to use caution when taking catmint with other sedatives. Catmint can amplify the sedative effects of the medication.