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Tea for Stress-Related Muscle Tension

Simply stopping to brew and drink a tea benefits nervous tension. I often prescribe teas for any medical complaint with stress as an underlying cause, for the self-care moment the ritual can offer. Passiflora and Scutellaria are general nervines, while Avena is a nourishing mineral tonic with trophorestorative effects on the nervous system. Glycyrrhiza supports the adrenal glands and their involvement in stress responses, plus it sweetens up the tea.

Ingredients

- Glycyrrhiza glabra 2 ounces (60 g)
- Avena sativa 2 ounces (60 g)
- Passiflora incarnata 1 ounce (30 g)
- Scutellaria laterifl ora 1 ounce (30 g)
- Equisetum arvense 1 ounce (30 g)

Procedure

1. Steep 1 tablespoon of the combined herbs per 1 cup (240 ml) hot water for 10 minutes.
2. Strain and drink 3 or more cups a day for 5 to 10 days, reducing as symptoms improve.

The Ingredients: A Closer Look

Glycyrrhiza glabra • Licorice

The sweet-tasting roots of Glycyrrhiza are used as a systemic all-purpose anti-inflammatory and anti-allergy agent, with particular affinity for mucous membrane inflammation and ulceration. The oral lesions of lichen planus, lupus, and erythema multiforme, as well as aphthous ulcers and canker sores may respond to licorice teas and solid extracts. Glycyrrhiza is also indicated in formulas to help wean patients whose eczema, asthma, and other allergic phenomena have been managed with steroids, to upregulate and normalize adrenal function or cortisol regulation. Glycyrrhizin is a steroidal saponin present in licorice root and contributes to its sweet flavor and has been shown to boost the effects of cortisone in RA patients when used in tandem. Glycyrrhizin is metabolized into glycyrrhetic acid in the gut, and both compounds are credited with anti-allergenic and anti-inflammatory activity.

Avena sativa • Oats

Avena is most used for allergic conditions as an herbal bath, plaster, or poultice to allay itching. Avena baths and poultices are indicated for all sorts of itching, including dermatitis, chicken pox, mosquito bites, pityriasis, and other pruritic skin conditions. Oatmeal baths have moisturizing, cleansing, antioxidative, and anti-inflammatory properties, and clinical research has shown that Avena has a very low allergenic potential, making it safe for atopic individuals, even in the midst of an acute episode of allergic dermatitis. Use as a full-strength bath for dermatitis, itchy dry skin, and nervous skin complaints.

***Scutellaria baicalensis* • Scute**

Mature roots of *Scutellaria baicalensis* are used medicinally as a broad-acting anti-inflammatory agent. *S. baicalensis* inhibits the release of histamine from basophils and mast cells and is appropriate as a lead herb internally to reduce allergic response and atopic skin conditions. Flavonoids in the roots modulate prostaglandin via cyclooxygenase inhibition, explaining traditional use in treating asthma, allergy, and dermatitis. Baicalein is one such flavonoid with numerous anti-inflammatory and antiallergic activities, reducing mast cell degranulation and inhibiting the release of eotaxin from fibroblasts. Wogonin is another *Scutellaria* flavonoid shown to reduce mite-induced inflammatory cytokine release and contributing to the antiallergy effects of the herb. *S. baicalensis* has been extensively used in TCM for thousands of years, with the common name of huang qin, where it contributes cooling and drying anti-inflammatory effects to formulas.

About the Author

Dr. Jill Stansbury is a naturopathic physician with over 30 years of clinical experience. She served as the chair of the Botanical Medicine Department of the National University of Natural Medicine for more than 20 years. She remains on the faculty, teaching and leading ethnobotany field courses in the Amazon. Dr. Stansbury lives in Battle Ground, WA, and is the medical director of Battle Ground Healing Arts. She is the author of *Herbal Formularies for Health Professionals*, a five-volume set that serves as a comprehensive, practical reference manual for herbalists, physicians, nurses, and allied health professionals.