

Herbs and Herbal Actions to Support Liver and Lymphatic Health

Alteratives

Alteratives help support elimination in the body and are often referred to as “blood cleansers.” They generally support the functioning of the liver or kidneys, two organs that help clean the blood. Most alteratives also support the movement of lymph fluids and act through mucous membrane tissues to help promote cleansing on a cellular level. Many alteratives are gentle, nutritive tonics, such as nettle, red clover blossom, and burdock root. Alteratives help restore balance in the body by helping to gently detoxify.

Herbal Alteratives Include:

Alfalfa, burdock, chickweed, cleavers, dandelion leaf and root, echinacea, nettle, red clover blossom, sarsaparilla, spilanthes, turmeric, violet leaf and flower

Liver-Specific Alteratives:

Alfalfa, burdock root, dandelion root, nettle leaf, red clover blossom, yellow dock root

Lymphatic-Specific Alteratives:

Burdock root, chickweed, cleavers, echinacea, nettle, red clover blossom, spilanthes, violet leaf and flower

Lymphatics

Lymphatics support the circulation of lymph fluids. They break up congestion in lymph nodes, relieving congestion of swollen glands. Lymphatics support elimination, help clean the blood, and stimulate the immune system (lymph fluid carries specific immune defenses). They are important for supporting skin issues, immunity, allergies, energy levels, and general detoxification.

Lymphatics Include:

Burdock root, calendula, chickweed, cleavers, echinacea root and flower, poke root, red clover, red root, spilanthes, violet leaf and flower

Note that poke root should only be used in low doses and only by adults. To dose, start with 1 drop twice per day, and increase each dose by 1 drop per day until you feel nauseous, at which point you should decrease the dose by 1 to 2 drops. Final doses vary from person to person; adults over 150 pounds may be able to get to a dose of up to 15 drops.

Hepatics

Hepatics work in a variety of ways to support the liver. Generally they nourish, tonify, and increase liver function. Sometimes they increase the flow of bile from the liver and gallbladder. Because the term *hepatic* is so broad, almost all herbs that affect the liver fall into this category. Most will fall into other more specific categories of herbal actions as well.

Herbal Hepatics Include:

Alfalfa, barberry root, burdock root, chicory root, dandelion leaf and root, elecampane root, globe artichoke (*Cynara scolymus*) leaf, goldenseal root, nettle leaf, Oregon grape root, red clover blossom, sarsaparilla root, sassafras root, turmeric root, yellow dock

Hepatoprotectives

Hepatoprotective herbs help protect and heal the liver. Many are high in antioxidants that help repair liver damage and protect the liver against damage from exposure to chemicals and toxins. Hepatoprotective herbs can be helpful in healing liver tissue and in preventing and treating liver damage.

Hepatoprotective Herbs Include:

Andrographis leaf and stem, chicory root, fennel seed, goji berry, licorice root, milk thistle seed, turmeric root

Bitters

Bitters stimulate the digestive process, increase metabolism, and stimulate the flow of bile from the liver and gallbladder. Bitter-tasting herbs stimulate liver function and promote cleansing and detoxification.

Herbal Bitters Include:

Barberry root, bupleurum root, chicory root, dandelion leaf and root, elecampane root, globe artichoke leaf, goldenseal root, Oregon grape root, sassafras root, turmeric root, yellow dock root