Herb Of The Month

April 1, 2000 By Michael Onstott

Echinacea

PART: Root, leaves, whole plant
FORMS: Liquid root extract or tincture (alcohol- based), tablets, capsules, freeze-dried extracts
USES: Internal: colds and fever, respiratory and urinary-tract infections and mouth inflammation. External: wounds and burns
DOSE: (3 to 5 times daily) 25 to 40 drops extract, 2 to 3 tablets or capsules
COST: (10-day treatment) $6 to $14
WARNING: Avoid long-term daily use. When treating infections, consult practitioner.

A potent purple people-pleaser, echinacea contains immune-stimulating and anti-inflammatory components that might make it seem a likely anti-HIV treatment. Not so fast: Although this flowering herb's popularity has lately blossomed for all types of conditions, proceed with caution. Most herbalists and researchers agree that long-term use of echinacea is counterindicated in HIV (and TB) because continually activating various immune functions may exhaust and even suppress the immune system, causing the body to attack itself. But most experts agree that HIVers can use echinacea for 10 days to three weeks, along with other immune boosters, to treat colds, flu and acute bacterial infections. The keys to the plant's power are chemicals that help mobilize infection-fighting white blood cells and antioxidants. For best results, try liquid extracts or tablets of echinacea angustifolia root or purpurea leaf juice or root.

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