Herb Of The Month

February 1, 2000 By Michael Onstott

Chamomile

Form: Bulk herb, tea bags, oil, tincture, capsules, ointments
Uses: Internally: stomachache; colds and related cough and fever; inflammation of the mouth, throat and intestinal tract Externally: skin dryness, wounds, burns and inflammation
Dose: (2 to 4 times daily, as needed): 3 to 6 teaspoons of bulk herb prepared as tea; 2 to 3 500-milligram capsules;
15 to 30 drops of tincture; several drops of oil
Cost: $12 (bulk herb), $16 (capsules), $16 (tincture), all monthly
Where: Specialty markets, health-food stores, the Internet
Warning: If you have ragweed allergy, you may be allergic.

The ancient Egyptians dedicated the tiny, daisy-like flowers of chamomile to their gods because the sweat-inducing petals broke fevers. Today, many Europeans consider the apple-scented blossoms a “cure-all.” Recent studies confirm that chamomile reduces irritable bowel syndrome and cramping, and helps with inflammatory disorders of the intestinal tract, mouth, throat and skin. The soothing herb can be applied as a tincture to reduce gum swelling and pain, inhaled as steam to relieve nasal congestion, and taken as tea to induce relaxation and treat stomachaches. Because of its anti-inflammatory, antifungal and antibacterial properties, it can be applied externally for many skin ailments, including healing wounds, bruises and burns, and as an eyewash (using strained tea). AIDS experts say chamomile is a useful tonic for HIVers with problems of the nerves, stomach, kidneys and liver.

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