

IPECACUANHA

Scientific name: *Cephaelis ipecacuanha* (Brot) A. Rich, *Psycotria ipecacuanha* (Brost) Stokes

Family: Rubiaceae

Popular names: Ipecacuanha, Ipecacuanha Rio, Matto Grosso ⁽¹⁾, cipó de camelos, cipó emético, cagosanga, ipeca oficial, ipeca preta. ⁽⁴⁾

Used parts: are the pulverized roots of the 3-to-4-year-old plant, which have been dug up and dried quickly in the sun ⁽¹⁾.

Botanical characteristics: *Cephaelis ipecacuanha* is a perennial, evergreen, leafy plant about 40cm high with a 2 to 4 mm thick rhizome from which sprout numerous 20 cm long fibrous roots. Some of these roots develop into tubers. The green stem may be creeping or ascending, simple or branched. It is somewhat quadrangular, occasionally bears adventitious roots. The opposite leaves are entire-margined, and the leaf blade, narrows into the short petiole. There are stipules at the base of the leaf, which are slit like awls and fused together with the petiole-like leaf sheath. The flowers are in terminal, capitulumshaped inflorescences surrounded by 4 to 6 bracts. The individual florets have a 5-tipped calyx, ciliated at the tips with a white campanulate-conical, 5-tipped corolla. A bitter, dark purple, fleshy drupe develops from the 2-carpeled ovary ⁽¹⁾.

Habitat: Indigenous to the sparser woods of Brazil; cultivated in India and on the Malaysian archipelago ⁽¹⁾.

Chemical composition: Isoquinoline alkaloids of the emetine type (2-4%): chief alkaloids emetine and cephaelin, starch (30 to 40%) ⁽¹⁾.

Indications:

- *Cephaelis ipecacuanha* is contained in expectorants and secretory preparations; it is used for amoebic dysentery, as an emetic in cases of poisoning ^(1, 2) and as a bronchial treatment. It is also used as an expectorant and to soothe and assist in coughing up of thick phlegm and in the treatment of croupous bronchitis in children ⁽¹⁾.
- Homeopathic uses: is used to treat bronchitis, asthma, whooping cough, gastrointestinal inflammations, disorders in blood pressure and bleeding of the mucous membranes ⁽¹⁾.

Dose:

Infusion: 0.5%: 10 mL (adults) ⁽¹⁾.

Others informations:

- Administration over extended periods can lead myopathias and frequent contact with the drug can trigger allergic reactions of the skin and the mucous membranes ⁽¹⁾.
- Isolation and characterization of six new glucosides, 6-O-methylpecoside, ipecosidic acid, demethylalangiside, neoipecoside, 7-O-methylneoipecoside and 3,4-dehydroneoipecoside ⁽²⁾.
- Re-examination of the constituents of the roots of *Cephaelis ipecacuanha* led to the isolation and identification of this same compound, as well as alangiside and that of another new glucoside, 7-O-methylpecoside ⁽³⁾.
- Not to be used during pregnancy ⁽¹⁾.
- Higher dosages of the drug have a nauseate effect. Toxic dosages can lead to mucous membrane erosion in the gastrointestinal tract, tachycardia, drop in blood pressure and cardiac rhythm disorders, as well as disorders in respiratory function and possibly to convulsions, shock and coma ⁽¹⁾.

References:

1. MEDICAL ECONOMICS COMPANY. **PDR for herbal medicines**. 2. ed. Montvale: Copyright, 2000.
2. ITOH, A.; TANAHASHI, T.; NAGAKURA, N. Six tetrahydroisoquinoline-monoterpene glucosides from *Cephaelis ipecacuanha*. **Phytochemistry**, v. 30, nº 9, p. 3117-3123, 1991.
3. ITOH, A. et al. Tetrahydroisoquinoline-monoterpene glucosides from *Alangium lamarckii* and *Cephaelis ipecacuanha*. **Phytochemistry**, v. 36, nº 2, p. 383-387, 1994.
4. LORENZI, H. MATOS, A. F. J. **Plantas medicinais no Brasil**. R. R. São Paulo: Donnelley América Latina, p. 411, 2002.