

Hoodia

This fact sheet provides basic information about the herb hoodia—common names, uses, potential side effects, and resources for more information. Hoodia is a flowering, cactus-like plant native to the Kalahari Desert in southern Africa. Its harvest is protected by conservation laws.

Common Names—hoodia, Kalahari cactus, Xhoba

Latin Name—*Hoodia gordonii*

What It Is Used For

- Kalahari Bushmen have traditionally eaten hoodia stems to reduce their hunger and thirst during long hunts.
- Today, hoodia is marketed as an appetite suppressant for weight loss.

How It Is Used

- Dried extracts of hoodia stems and roots are used to make capsules, powders, and chewable tablets. Hoodia can also be used in liquid extracts and teas.
- Hoodia products often contain other herbs or minerals, such as green tea or chromium picolinate.

What the Science Says

There is no reliable scientific evidence to support hoodia's use. No studies of the herb in people have been published.

Side Effects and Cautions

- Hoodia's safety is unknown. Its potential risks, side effects, and interactions with medicines and other supplements have not been studied.
- The quality of hoodia products varies widely. News reports suggest that some products sold as hoodia do not contain any hoodia.
- Tell your health care providers about any complementary and alternative practices you use. Give them a full picture of what you do to manage your health. This will help ensure coordinated and safe care.

Sources

Hoodia. Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database Web site. Accessed at <http://www.naturaldatabase.com> on May 16, 2007.

Hoodia (*Hoodia gordonii*). Natural Standard Database Web site. Accessed at <http://www.naturalstandard.com> on May 16, 2007.

For More Information

Visit the NCCAM Web site at nccam.nih.gov and view:

- *What's in the Bottle? An Introduction to Dietary Supplements* at nccam.nih.gov/health/bottle/
- *Herbal Supplements: Consider Safety, Too* at nccam.nih.gov/health/supplement-safety/

NCCAM Clearinghouse

Toll-free in the U.S.: 1-888-644-6226

TTY (for deaf and hard-of-hearing callers): 1-866-464-3615

E-mail: info@nccam.nih.gov

CAM on PubMed

Web site: nccam.nih.gov/camonpubmed/

NIH Office of Dietary Supplements

Web site: www.ods.od.nih.gov

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