

Historical and Scientific use of *Avena sativa*

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Avena sativa aka: oat, is an all around medicinal and edible plant. All aerial parts are used, including the stem aka: oatstraw, the oat grain itself aka: oatmeal, and the immature green, unripe seeds aka: milky oats. There is only a short two week window in which one can harvest the milky oats.

Avena has been used for more than 4000 years. Think of oats as food for the nervous system. Milky oats can be prepared fresh with either an alcohol extraction or my personal favorite of 75% vegetable glycerin and 25% brandy, and let to sit for 4 weeks. This preparation is so delicious and has an almost instant, calming effect. I use it in several of my herbal formulas for stress, anxiety, sleep, smoking cessation and to reduce tingling and numbness in the extremities.

Historically, milky oats have been used to treat “nervous debility, stress, weak nerve force, anxiety, depression and the accompanying exhaustion, and general fatigue” (Felter, 1922). *Avena* is relaxing yet restorative, promotes a good night’s sleep, helps to strengthen resistance, and soothes irritation and inflammation, especially where there are sensations of burning, flushing such as with night sweats.

Avena is rich with the minerals silica, calcium, iron, phosphorus, copper, magnesium, chromium and zinc. Both the seed and the straw contain a significant amount of starch, as well as protein, fatty acids, and vitamins B1, B2, D and E. (Caldecott 2014)

Due to the positive, soothing and restorative effect on the central nervous system, *Avena* has the ability to assist those withdrawing from alcohol, tobacco, morphine, and opiates.

Back in 1971, a study was conducted on a group of heavy smokers, in which half were given an oat tincture and another group given a placebo. “The superiority of the oat extract was clearly evident and also proved to be statistically significant. Cigarette smoking in the oats group decreased impressively, and the effect clearly persisted for two months after discontinuation of the medication.” (Weiss 2000)

“In the treatment of the morphine habit, our subsequent experience has not confirmed our early anticipations, and yet it is a useful addition to the treatment. It should be used in conjunction with capsicum, strychnine, xanthoxylum, or hyoscyamine hydrochlorate, and sustained in its action by persistent concentrated nutrition.” (Ellingwood 1919)

It’s truly perplexing to me that I could not find any modern day research on *Avena* assisting with drug withdrawals; yet it is common knowledge throughout herbal communities, in herb books about addictions, as well as anecdotal evidence presented by my clients and even my own personal experience.

Avena is completely safe to ingest for infants, children, lactating and pregnant women, and is confirmed as so on the Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database website. Unless a

person has gluten intolerance or an allergy to oats, *Avena* is a safe and nourishing food and plant medicine.

RESOURCES:

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