

# The benefits of Milk Thistle

Milk thistle is a flowering plant that is part of the daisy family. It gets its name from its bristly and prickly nature and the “milky” sap that oozes out of the plant. The leaves, fruits, and seeds of milk thistle have been used for centuries as a natural medicine. Milk thistle is one of the world’s most powerful liver detoxifying agents.

Milk thistle was used by medical herbalists in the late nineteenth century to treat varicose veins and liver, spleen, and kidney disorders. Today, it is primarily used to improve the function of the liver, kidneys, and gastrointestinal system. Many individuals have seen dramatic improvement using milk thistle for health issues such as psoriasis, menstrual problems, jaundice, and poor circulation.

## Milk Thistle and Liver Health

The active antioxidant compound within milk thistle is the flavonoid complex called Silymarin. This anti-oxidant is one of the most powerful liver detoxifying agents. It helps to boost glutathione and superoxide dismutase which are two the body’s master super antioxidants. One study found that silymarin increased glutathione content in the intestines and liver by up to 50%. Boosting glutathione helps protect the intestines from inflammatory damage that leads to ulcers and colitis.

Milk thistle guards the liver’s numerous hepatic cell membranes and slows the rate at which toxins can be absorbed into the liver. Research has shown that silymarin enhances protein synthesis to enhance liver cell regeneration and counteract the effects of poisons on the liver. It has been used to treat alcoholic hepatitis, alcoholic fatty liver, cirrhosis-liver poisoning, and viral hepatitis.

# **Silymarin and Kidney Health**

Silymarin concentrates in kidney cells where it helps repair and regenerate protein enzymes and DNA. One study indicated that it increased kidney cell replication by 25-30% over control groups. This is extremely important for individuals who have suffered mild-to-severe kidney damage from infections, kidney stone formation, or environmental toxins.

The kidneys are one of the major organs that are damaged by chemotherapy agents. Research has shown that the major compounds in silymarin protect the kidneys from these dangerous drugs. In particular, they protect the cell membrane of the kidney, cells allowing for healthy cell receptor activity.

Silymarin is considered to be 10 times as potent as vitamin E and increases the activity of the powerful antioxidant superoxide dismutase (SOD) in red and white blood cells in patients suffering with liver disease. This increases oxygenation and immunity.

Studies have shown that the major compounds of silymarin are silybin and silychristin. These compounds have a low absorption rate at about 20-50%. It is better to use milk thistle in a standardized extract. Milk thistle can also be fermented in an organic acid base for optimal digestion and nutrient assimilation.

## **Milk Thistle as a Demulcent**

Milk Thistle is a demulcent that improves the health of the body's mucous membranes. This reduces inflammation within the skin cells, sinus and respiratory tract, and kidney and bladder wall lining. It also reduces inflammatory stress in the bile duct and inhibits the formation of gall stones. This improves the functionality of the gall bladder and allows for

complete bile release.

Milk Thistle also helps soften and improve the moisturization of the skin, This is especially helpful for individuals with acne and exzema and other skin impurities. It has also been shown to improve the overall glow and radiance of the skin quality.

**Sources For This Article Include:**

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