

PHYTOTHERAPEUTIC POTENTIAL OF NATURAL HERBAL MEDICINE FOR THE TREATMENT OF MILD TO MODERATE SEVERE VULVAR PRURITUS

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ABSTRACT: Vulva is the female external genitalia. Vulva include the mons pubis, labia majora, labia minora, clitoris, urethral opening and perineum. Any condition causing the unpleasant itching, burning and irritation in the vulvar part is referred to as vulvar pruritus. Vulvar pruritus can be due to fungal, viral and bacterial infection. It may be due to any allergic condition and adverse reaction to products. Vulvar pruritus improves with treatment, but some cases require special attention and may become serious if left untreated. In the present review we discuss some medicinal plants used traditionally in the management of vulvar pruritus.

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INTRODUCTION

Vulvar pruritus is a dermatological condition in which there is an unpleasant itching in the vulvar part of female genital area. It may be due to any infection, inflammatory condition and neoplastic disorder (1). It is usually chronic condition associated with vulvar disorders (2). The common causes are Atopic dermatitis, contact dermatitis and allergic contact dermatitis (3). Other conditions that causes vulvar pruritus are body fluids, some topical medicine, female hygiene products, tight fitting clothes. Similarly, allergens also involve in itching and dermatitis in female patients having vulvar disease. Allergens that commonly causes vulvar pruritus fragrances soaps and detergents, sanitary pads, cleansing wipes, spermicides, antiseptics, lubricants, and even topical creams like antibacterial, steroids, anesthetics, and antifungal products. Rubber products, like condoms, diaphragms, pessaries, and gloves may also cause itching. (4).

Lichen simplex chronicus is an eczema disorder affects commonly vulvar skin. It cause severe itching and due to over scratching scaly, thickened plaques develop (4). Candidiasis a fungal infection causes vulvar pruritus. Sexually transmitted disease trichomoniasis cause itchiness and green frothy discharge that is smelly. Bacterial vaginosis and genital herpes also causes vulvar itching along with other symptoms. Signs and symptoms include; burning /itching, the feeling of crawling under the skin, redness and swelling, associated vaginal discharge, skin cracking, whitening of skin cracking and painful sex (dyspareunia).

Vulvar pruritis improve with treatment, but some cases requires special attention and may become serious if left untreated. The exact cause of vulvar pruritis should ruled out and treated accordingly.

Some measures prevent vulvar pruritis such as water and soap free washes should be used instead of fragrant bath products. Vaginal douche and wash should be avoided

as these disturb the normal flora of vagina. Use barrier ointments before swimming, wear cotton fabrics instead of nylon, avoid tight fitting cloths and always wipe after urination.

MEDICINAL PLANTS USED IN VULVAR PRURITIS

Punica granatum L.

Punica granatum commonly known as pomegranate. It is a shrub and belong to Punicaceae family.

P. granatum consists of Polyphenols, flavonoids, organic acids, anthocyanin, fatty acids, tannins, fatty acids and vitamins etc. The decoction and infusion of the flower of pomegranate used in diarrhea, and vaginal discharge. The seeds of the plant are also effective in vaginal discharge and wound healing (5).

Q. infectoria Olive.

Oak galls (Mazu) are abnormal growths formed as a result of egg deposition of gall-wasp *Adleria gallae-tinctoriae* Olivier on the young twigs of the *Quercus infectoria* plant. The galls contains tannins, gallic acid, ellagic acid, methyl betulate, methyloleanolate, sitosterol, starch and calcium oxalate. These galls are used for medicinal purpose (6). It is used in various diseases such as diarrhea, dysentery, dyspepsia, excessive sweating, gonorrhoea, haematuria, haemorrhoids/piles. Traditionally the oak galls are tremendously used in leucorrhoea, menorrhagia, vaginal discharge associated vaginal itching and vaginal laxity (7).

Myrtus communis

Myrtus communis is commonly known as True Myrtle is aromatic flowering plant. It is a shrub. It has Myrtaceae family (6). The plant contains flavonoids, fatty acids, terpenoids, tannins, triterpenes, volatile substances, alpha pinene, sugars, organic acid such as malic acid and citric acid (8). The berries are used in diarrhoea, dysentery, rheumatism, foot ulcers, aphthae, hairfall, haemorrhages,

leucorrhoea, lax vaginal walls. The leaves are useful in cerebral diseases especially epilepsy, dyspepsia, eczema, pulmonary disorders, intertrigo, uterine prolapse, and vaginal discharge (9).

Marrubium vulgare

M. vulgare is belong to Lamiaceae family. It is an annual plant. *M. vulgare* is commonly known as white horehound (10). Phytoconstituents present in *M. vulgare* are flavonoids, tannins, saponins, steroids, terpenoids, and volatile oils. The aerial parts of plant contain marrubiin, ursolic acid and choline. *M. vulgare* acts as antioxidant agent, and due to this, it is used in the treatments of diabetes mellitus, cancer and hepatic disorder. In addition it is antihypertensive, anti-inflammatory, wound-healing, hypolipidemic (11).

Iris germanica L.

Iris germanica L. is ornamental flowering plant. It belongs to Iridaceae family (11). It consists of flavonoids, sterols, triterpenes, ceramides, phenolics and benzoquinones. The pharmacological activities are hypoglycemic, neuroprotective, antimicrobial, hypolipidemic, anti-proliferative, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anti-plasmodial, cytotoxic, and antimutagenic effects. It is used for diuretic, cathartic, expectorant and emetic purpose. It is emmenagogue and has also been used for the treatment female genitourinary infections (12).

Ficus religiosa L.

Ficus religiosa commonly known as peepal. It belong to (Moraceae) family. This plant is rich in many bioactive compounds such as tannins, flavonoids, saponins, alkaloids, tannins and phenols etc. Traditionally, it was used in the treatment of sexual disorders, leucorrhoea, asthma cough, diarrhoea, haematuria, ear-ache, toothache, and scabies (13).

Discussion:

Vulvar pruritus, or itching of the vulva, can be a bothersome and uncomfortable condition. It can be caused by various factors, including infections, allergies, hormonal imbalances, and skin conditions. Infections such as yeast infections, bacterial vaginosis, and sexually transmitted infections can lead to vulvar pruritus. Allergies to chemicals found in soaps, detergents, and feminine hygiene products can also cause itching. Hormonal imbalances that occur during menopause or pregnancy can lead to vaginal dryness and itching (1, 14). Additionally, skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis, and lichen sclerosus can cause vulvar pruritus. There are several treatment options available for vulvar pruritus, including medication, topical creams, and lifestyle changes. Treatment depends on the underlying cause of the itching. For infections, antifungal or antibiotic medication may be prescribed (15). For skin conditions, topical corticosteroids may be used to reduce inflammation and itching. Lifestyle changes such as wearing loose-fitting clothing and avoiding irritants can also

help to relieve symptoms. Phytotherapy, or the use of plant-based medicines, may also be helpful in relieving symptoms of vulvar pruritus. Calendula, aloe vera, tea tree oil, chamomile, and witch hazel are some of the herbal remedies that have been traditionally used for this purpose (16).

Conclusion:

The itching of the vulva, also known as vulvar pruritus, can stem from various factors such as infections, allergies, hormonal imbalances, and skin conditions. The use of plant-based medicines, or phytotherapy, may provide relief for the symptoms of vulvar pruritus. There are several herbal remedies that have been traditionally used for this purpose, including calendula, aloe vera, tea tree oil, chamomile, and witch hazel. However, it is essential to note that these remedies should not replace medical treatment for underlying conditions that may be causing vulvar pruritus. In case of persistent or worsening symptoms, it is crucial to seek proper diagnosis and treatment from a healthcare provider.

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