

Elderflower  
*Sambucus nigra*



### Benefits of Elderflower

Elderflower belongs to a group of flowering plants in the Adoxaceae family. The medicinal properties of this plant are often overlooked as we tend to focus more on how it is used as flavour and in making drinks and in food.

### Different Types of Elder

The elder plant is from the genus *Sambucus* with more than 2 dozen identified species around the world. Identification of species and common names often refers to the region in which these plants are found or the colour of their berries. A few elder species include:

- *Sambucus nigra* - Black Elder/European elder/Elderberry
- *Sambucus mexicana* - Mexican Elder
- *Sambucus racemosa* - European Red Elder
- *Sambucus australasica* - Yellow Elder
- *Sambucus adnata* - Asian Dwarf Elder

In zoopharmacognosy we use *Sambucus nigra*, the European variety

Different species of elder have berries that vary in colour from black or bluish black to red and even yellow or white. The elderflower is white to pale cream in colour. Although the elder plant is found in areas all over the world, its presence is most commonly seen in the northern hemisphere, with at least 10 identified species found in North America.

## Major Properties

- Antiseptic
- Anti-inflammatory
- Antibacterial
- antiviral

## Health Benefits of Elderflower

Elderflower has been used in traditional medicine all over the world in many different cultures due to its antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties. The most common uses are for colds and flu, sinus infections, and other respiratory disturbances. As a supplement, elderflower also has diuretic and laxative properties and is helpful in relieving occasional constipation. Elderflower has antibacterial and antiviral properties and may also help alleviate some allergies and boost the functioning of the immune system. Topically, elderflower might help reduce pain and swelling in joints due to some forms of arthritis and is used to stop bleeding. As an oral rinse, elderflower can be used for its antiseptic properties as a mouthwash and gargle. Elderflower also reduces blood sugar levels, very similar to the way insulin works.

## Elderflower against MSRA

Research in Ireland showed that elderflower extract was effective in killing many common hospital pathogens, including methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)<sup>1</sup>. This study gave scientific proof of elderflower's antibacterial properties against most gram negative and gram positive bacteria tested that align with traditional medicine uses of the past. Further study of elderflower components showed the potential for antiviral and anti-inflammatory benefits as well.

## Active Ingredients in Elderflower

Ingredient	Action
Bioflavonoids, mostly flavones & flavonols	Antioxidant Anti-cancer Anti-inflammatory antibacterial
Flavonols: quercetin, isoquercetrin, anthocuanins	Also antiviral properties
Chlorogenic acids e.g. cinnamic acid	Allergies, regulate blood glucose levels, laxative effect
Triterpenoids especially $\beta$ -amyrrin, erythrodiol, oleanolic acid	Analgesic, anti-inflammatory, anti-cancer.