

# Traditional herb medicine

## Lapacho®



### Story

The Amazonian Indians have been using for several centuries the internal bark of trees of species like the *Tabebuia impetiginosa*, in infusions or macerated as a treatment for several medicinal purposes. These trees have different popular designations, including Lapacho in Argentina, Pau d'Arco or Ipé Roxo in Brazil and Taheebo in other regions. The Guarani, Tupi-Nambo and Callaway tribes still use it nowadays, in their traditional medicine.



### Active Constituents

Lapacho is extracted from the inner bark of the *Tabebuia impetiginosa* specie and the most important constituents are 18 different quinones, including both naphthoquinones and anthraquinones, which rarely occur together in the same plant. The naphthoquinones lapachol,  $\beta$ -lapachone and xyloidone are considered the most important ones. Other constituents are the bioflavonoid quercetin, lapachenole, carnosol, indoles, coenzyme Q, alkaloids such as tecomine, hydroxybenzoic acids, and steroidal saponins.

Lapachol was the first chemical substance from lapacho to be extensively researched and its anti-bacterial action was discovered in Brazil in 1956, and later that year the same research group isolated the  $\alpha$ - and  $\beta$ -lapachone and xyloidone; these constituents also proved to be bactericidal and fungicidal.

### Indications

Complementary action in all forms of carcinoma and leukemia. Bacterial infections, e.g. staphylococci, streptococci, brucella. Viral infections, e.g. influenza, common cold, herpes, polio, Epstein-Barr, HIV. Yeast and fungal infections, e.g. candidiasis, ringworm, athlete's foot. Parasitic infections, e.g. malaria. Inflammation of the mouth, nose and throat. Disorders of the GIT: mucosal inflammation, colitis, Crohn's disease, polyps, dysentery, peptic ulcers. Disorders of the urogenital system: cystitis, urethritis, prostatitis, bladder polyps, vaginitis, leucorrhoea, inflammation of the cervix.

Other indications include: gastritis, stomach ulcer, wounds, ulcers, crural ulcers, and fistulae; anemia; skin conditions due to poor elimination, eczema, acne, furunculosis, psoriasis; arthritic pain, pain in general; arteriosclerosis, weakness of the heart; diabetes; asthma and bronchitis; hypertension.

### Dosage forms

The usual forms of administration are tea, syrup, tablets, and cream for topical applications. A decoction of 15-20g of inner bark in 0.5 litre of water (5-15 minutes) is taken at least once daily, preferably 2-3 times daily. The syrup forms must be taken diluting 2 tablespoons in little water, 3 times daily before meals. The normal daily dosage for tablets is 6-9 500mg tablets divided in 3 intakes daily with meals. The cream is for being applied several times over the affected zones.

Review  
of  
Lapacho

Lapachol and other naphthoquinones are credited with lapacho's antibiotic and anti-tumor activity. Lapacho has a powerful antioxidant constituent as well, whose presence is believed to be related to the plant's ability to survive at altitudes with high ozone content. Lapacho also contains indoles, which are present in the Cruciferae family and are known to be active in carcinogen detoxification and to promote antioxidant activity.

Lapacho demonstrates anti-viral and anti-parasitic activity, and has been found to be effective as a fungicide in treating such conditions as vaginal candidiasis, ringworm, and *Candida albicans*.

Article published by Oswald, Edward H., Lapacho. *British Journal of Phytotherapy*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1993/94, pp. 112-117.

