The Truth About Echinacea

What is Echinacea?
Echinacea (also referred to as Echinacea purpurea or Echinacea angustifolia) is an herb that is native to North America. The Lakota Native American Indians used it for hundreds of years as a remedy for venomous bites and stings, enlarged glands, sore throats, septic conditions, rabbies, toothaches and supporting the immune system in general. The roots of the E. angustifolia species were used primarily.

What is the active ingredient of Echinacea?
The active ingredient are the alkylamides found in great quantities in the roots of the angustifolia species. Not all Echinacea is equal and when research is done, the type used is typically the purpurea as it is easier to cultivate and the parts used are the aerial parts: the leaves and the tops. These parts of the Echinacea plant contain 10-20 times fewer alkylamides than the roots. The E. angustifolia species has the highest amount of alkylamides in their roots but harder to cultivate and more expensive so the purpurea species root is often used in combination. The alkylamides can be detected immediately upon chewing the root. The more of a tingle created in the mouth the better the quality. The Eclectic Medical Movement in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s (before the use of antibiotics) used primarily the angustifolia for this reason. The alkylamides are the only active ingredient detected in the human blood stream, not the polysaccharides as was previously thought.

The Eclectic physicians found Echinacea to also be very helpful in treating cholera, bacterial meningitis, dysentery and gangrene. When reading Echinacea research it must be determined which species was used and what part of the plant.

Does Taking Echinacea Make Your Mouth Tingle?
MediHerb Echinacea Premium contains both species and the root only is used. One drop of this remedy placed into the mouth sets the mouth tingling for many minutes whereas other brands don’t tingle at all or only slightly. If Echinacea has not worked for a patient it is no doubt as a result of the poor quality. Before saying that Echinacea doesn’t work try MediHerb Echinacea Premium first.

Is Echinacea Effective For Acute Infections?
Echinacea supports the “innate” immunity of the body. This aspect of the immune system is the first responder in any infectious process. Clinical trials at the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland Oregon, determined that 70% reduction in the winter incidences of infections took place when Echinacea was taken routinely throughout the winter. The white blood cell count increased and it stimulated the innate immune response. Echinacea is also helpful in any acute infections including the urinary tract and intestinal tract. It is used in acute and chronic hepatitis C infections and is also effective against bacteria, viruses, parasites and protozoa.

Can Echinacea Be Used in Chronic Infections?
Our immune system is under siege in the modern world. There are many factors confusing the immune system including bacteria, viruses and parasites. These are often called stealth pathogens. They stimulate auto-immune responses in the body forming the basis of many diseases: Crohn’s disease, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Ulcerative Colitis, Multiple Sclerosis, Lupus, Ankylosing Spondylitis, Myasthenia Gravis etc. In auto-immune diseases the innate immunity is compromised stimulating an overactive acquired immunity called auto-immune disease. Echinacea supports the innate immunity of the body therefore preventing autoimmunity. Stimulating the innate immunity will also prevent cancers, slow the aging process and prevent respiratory infections in the elderly. It can take up to two weeks for the deeper anti-inflammatory aspects of Echinacea to work. Dr. Sandra Miller in her research has found that Echinacea will stimulate not only the bone marrow to increase Natural Killer (NK)cell function but also their number.

How Well is Echinacea Absorbed?
Echinacea alkylamides found in E. angustifolia are well absorbed across the gut mucosa and are metabolized within 6 hours therefore the reason for taking the remedy 3 times per day. E. purpurea is degraded by the liver much more slowly than the E. angustifolia species. Due to the expense of the E. angustifolia species, the E. purpurea is added and this has the added advantage of enhancing the bioavailability of the alkylamides.

Myths and Fallacies About the Use of Echinacea:
1. *Echinacea should not be used long term because it will deplete the immune system.* The study that showed this was flawed. Firstly it used the purpurea species intravenously and not orally. The study in fact found that the white blood cell activity improved, not decreased, over time during oral use. The study length was only 11 days. In other research alkylamides have a strong anti-inflammatory effect when taken over time showing that the immune response is extended, not worn out. Kerry Bone himself has taken daily dosage of two tablets per day of Echinacea Premium for 10 years and has found it to be anti-aging and anti-inflammatory.

2. *Echinacea should not be used for auto-immune diseases.* There are no clinical studies showing an adverse effect resulting from Echinacea in autoimmune disorders. Echinacea is not an immune
3. **Echinacea should not be used to treat asthmatic patients.** The alkylamides do not stimulate inflammatory cytokines as do the polysaccharides of other Echinacea products on the market. Not only are the alkylamides safe but also beneficial in reducing the incidence of infections which precipitate asthma attacks. However Echinacea tops used in teas or tinctures should be avoided in asthmatics due to the risk of allergic reaction. Echinacea premium only contains the root and not the tops of Echinacea.

### When Should Echinacea Be Used?
- Long term for the treatment of chronic immune deficiency
- For the treatment of acute infections
- For the prevention of infections long term in some individuals
- For the treatment of allergies due to the immune modulating effect
- For the treatment of autoimmune diseases because of its immune modulating and anti-inflammatory effects
- For the treatment of skin conditions due to effects on immunity and blood purifying activity
- Treatment of lymphatic congestion
- Treatment of spider and other venomous bites
- For immune support in individuals receiving conventional cancer treatments.

### What Dosages of Echinacea Premium are Suggested?
- For acute infections 3-4 teaspoons (15-20 ml) or 6-8 tablets per day
- For chronic infections: two teaspoons (10 ml) per day or 4 tablets per day
- For prevention of infections, anti-aging and anti-inflammatory effects: 2 tablets or 1 teaspoon (5 ml) per day

### Why Choose Mediherb Herbs?
Mediherb was born out of the passion of Master Herbalist Kerry Bone. A practicing herbalist with over 20 years of experience, Kerry is also the author of world recognized herbal textbooks including “The Essential Guide to Herbal Safety” and “Clinical Applications of Ayurvedic and Chinese Herbs”. He was a research scientist for 8 years before he studied herbology in the UK in the early 80’s. Returning to practice in Australia he became frustrated by the poor quality of herbal products available at the time and the resulting effects for his patients. He developed a unique method for extracting herbs ensuring a high quality product every time. Word of mouth spread and Mediherb was born. Mediherb is the largest purchaser and processing plant of raw herbs in Australia and operates in accordance to strict pharmaceutical standards.

Mediherb does not substitute species of one herb for another and their quality assurance program tests all herbs to make sure this does not happen. They check for adulteration of herbs where a cheaper herb or pharmaceutical is mixed with a more expensive herb. They check for the quality of each herb making sure the active ingredients are present. A battery of tests are performed on every herb looking for pesticides, heavy metals, microbe levels and radiation levels. If an herb is rejected then the manufacturing process is hindered and the product may be temporarily unavailable for this reason.

In our office ask for the Echinacea taste challenge. One drop will numb not only your tongue but your entire mouth. Try it!

### References
- The Truth About Echinacea by Kerry Bone
- Echinacea: Modern Research Confirms Traditional Use by Kerry Bone, Berris Burgoyne

### Recipe: Curried Lentil & Wild Rice Salad

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<td>1 cup</td>
<td>wild rice</td>
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<td>1 cup</td>
<td>green or brown lentils</td>
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<td>1/2 cup</td>
<td>currants</td>
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<td>1/4 cup</td>
<td>finely chopped red onion</td>
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<td>1/3 cup</td>
<td>roasted slivered almonds</td>
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**Dressing**

| 1/4 cup | white wine vinegar |
| 1 tsp  | ground cumin      |
| 1 tsp  | Dijon mustard      |
| 1/2 tsp | each honey, salt & ground coriander |
| 1/4 tsp | each tumeric, paprika, nutmeg & ground cardamom |
| 1/8 tsp | each cinnamon, ground cloves & cayenne |
| 1/3 cup | olive oil          |

Cook lentils in 3 cups of boiling water for about 25 minutes or until tender. Drain and rinse well with cold water. Cook rice until tender in 2 cups of boiling water.

Transfer rice & lentils to large bowl. Add currants and onion; set aside.

In a small bowl, mix all dressing ingredients, whisking in oil at the end. Pour over rice/lentil mixture and toss gently.

Let salad cool for several hours, covered in refrigerator. Sprinkle with roasted almonds before serving.