Andrographis (Andrographis paniculata)

**Practice points**

Andrographis is commonly used to support the immune system and reduce the symptoms of the common cold. It may also be useful for some inflammatory conditions including ulcerative colitis and rheumatoid arthritis, and has recently been shown to reduce elevated triglyceride levels.

Caution is required in pregnancy, lactation or prior to some surgeries.

**Key indications**

**Treatment of upper respiratory tract infections (URTIs):** May reduce the severity of symptoms associated with uncomplicated URTIs e.g. cough, expectoration, nasal discharge, headache, fever, sore throat, earache, fatigue and sleep disturbance (RCT).

**Cough:** May reduce the frequency and severity of cough (systematic review and meta-analysis of 6 randomised controlled trials (RCTs)).

**Hypertriglyceridemia:** Reduces triglyceride levels comparable to the effect of gemfibrozil in patients with modest hypertriglyceridemia (RCT).

**Ulcerative colitis:** Improves symptoms of ulcerative colitis and increases the chance of remission at 8 weeks (RCT)

**Rheumatoid arthritis:** Reduces joint tenderness and swelling and may reduce the intensity of joint pain in people with rheumatoid arthritis (RCT).

**Key actions**

- Immune modulation
- Antimicrobial
- Anti-inflammatory
- Antiplatelet
- Hypolipidaemic

**Recommended Doses**

Common doses are 1000-2000 mg Andrographis daily, taken with food in two or three divided doses. Standardised extracts that report andrographolide content may be more reliable.

**URTI Treatment:** equivalent of ~66 mg andrographolide daily

**Hypertriglyceridemia:** equivalent of 120 mg andrographolide daily

**Ulcerative colitis:** Andrographis 1200-1800 mg day

**Rheumatoid arthritis:** equivalent to 30 mg andrographolides three times daily

**Children:** Andrographis, in combination with other herbs, has been tested in children without adverse effects (e.g. 5.6 mg twice daily for five days per week over a three month period).

A very bitter tasting herb so solid dose forms may be better tolerated than liquid.

**Adverse Effects**

Generally well tolerated

High doses may cause headache, fatigue, urticaria, GIT upset; unpleasant sensation in the chest or metallic taste in the mouth.

A number of case reports of hypersensitivity reactions exist

**Cautions/ Contraindications**

- Insufficient evidence to confirm safety in pregnancy or lactation.
- Suspend use one week prior to high-risk surgery where small bleeds have serious consequences e.g. neurosurgery.

**Possible Interactions**

- Anticoagulants and antiplatelet drugs: theoretically may have additive effect
- CYP1A1, CYP1A2 and CYP2B substrates: theoretically may decrease drug effect
- Immunosuppressants: theoretically may decrease drug effect

**REFERENCES**