

# RED CLOVER

## WHAT IS IT?

Red clover is a plant. The flowering tops of the red clover plant are used to make medicine in tablet, capsule, tea, or tincture forms. Historically, red clover has been used for cancer and respiratory problems such as whooping cough, asthma, and bronchitis. Red clover is most frequently studied for the treatment of menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes.

## WHAT IS IT USED FOR?

Menopausal symptoms

High blood pressure

High cholesterol

Osteoporosis

## RESEARCH/STUDIES

- Several small studies on the effectiveness of Red clover for menopausal symptoms had mixed results. A large study found that red clover did not have any effect on menopausal symptoms.
- Promensil® is a Red clover product and was found not to be any more effective than placebo in relieving menopausal symptoms-it relieved flashes more quickly but not more frequently.
- Another study suggests that taking Promensil® 40 mg isoflavones every day did not increase breast tissue density on mammography. This suggests that taking red clover orally might not significantly affect breast cancer risk.
- Studies have been too short (less than 6 months) to determine if Red clover has “estrogen-like” effects on the uterus.
- It is not known if taking red clover isoflavones has any effect on breast cancer risk.
- One “*in vitro*” (test tube) study found that estrogen-receptor positive breast cancer cells were stimulated by red clover.

## IS IT SAFE?

- Red clover contains isoflavones that are changed in the body to “phytoestrogens” which are plant-based compounds similar to estrogen. They are capable of binding to estrogen receptors which may increase estrogen levels and possibly increase risk of breast cancer in women with hormone receptor positive breast cancer.
- No serious side effects have been reported in people using red clover for up to one year.
- Red clover seems safe for most adults when used for short periods of time.

## SIDE EFFECTS

Breast tenderness

Weight gain

Muscle ache

Nausea

Headache

Vaginal spotting in some women

Potential increased risk of bleeding

## WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS

- AVOID if allergic to red clover or other isoflavones.
- Red clover may increase risk of bleeding and slow blood clotting so you may need to stop taking it before surgery.
- Based on the available evidence, it is believed that red clover has effects like estrogen-this is important for women with estrogen positive cancers.