

Neem: From Ethnodentistry to Dental Products

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Neem has a long history of enthnodental use, and its twigs are the most popular chewing-/stick on the Asian subcontinent and Burma and are also used for teeth cleaning throughout Africa and in Guyana, South America. Microbiological studies validating this empirical selection suggests that much of neem's antidontopathic potential is related to its fluoride content and a variety of antibiotic, anti-inflammatory and anti-plaque properties found in the twigs and oil. These data correlate well with clinical trials utilizing extracts of the twigs or dentifrices containing neem oil that indicate that plaque indices are significantly reduced and that gingivitis is ameliorated. All these studies validate the worth of neem in promoting dental health. What remains unknown is if like fluoride in common dentifrices, daily exposure through dental hygienic practices also results in the assimilation of a wide vareity of neem components, including those that affect fecundity. Since this issue is critical to the promotion of neem for dental use, it is important that a better understanding of the pharmacokinetics of the compounds relevant to this aspect are fully understood.