

Phytotherapy in Treating Children's Common Cold

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article type: Review Article	Objective: Children are frequently afflicted with common colds due to the wide range of circulating cold viruses and their developing immune systems. Given their susceptibility to such illnesses, there is a growing interest in exploring natural alternatives to conventional drug therapy. Traditional medicine offers a rich tradition of utilizing herbal remedies for the treatment of colds. This review aims to identify and evaluate the efficacy of herbal medicines for treating colds in children.
Article History: Received: 2024/08/5 Revised: 2024/10/19 Accepted: 2024/12/27 Published Online: 2024/12/30	Methods: This systematic review employed a comprehensive search strategy to identify relevant literature on the use of herbal medicines for treating common colds in children. Authoritative scientific databases, including Google Scholar, SID, Magiran, and Scopus, were systematically searched using the following keywords: 'common cold,' 'children,' 'traditional medicine,' 'herbal medicine,' and 'treatment.' Irrelevant articles were excluded from the review process.
 Correspondence to: Mohadeseh Pirhadi Email: m.pirhadi371@gmail.com	Results: The review identified a range of herbal medicines traditionally employed for the treatment of common colds in children. These include <i>Tilia cordata</i> (linden), <i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i> (licorice), <i>Sambucus nigra</i> (elderberry), <i>Melaleuca alternifolia</i> (tea tree oil), <i>Hyssopus officinalis</i> (hyssop), <i>Inula helenium</i> (elecampane), <i>Plantago lanceolata</i> (plantain), <i>Althea officinalis</i> (marshmallow), <i>Eucalyptus globulus</i> (eucalyptus), <i>Citrus limonum</i> (lemon), and <i>Allium sativum</i> (garlic), among others.
	Conclusion: Several medicinal plants possess antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, and antiviral properties that may be beneficial for children. The plants identified in this review, owing to their antimicrobial and antiviral activities, hold potential for alleviating the symptoms of common colds in pediatric populations.
	Keywords: Infection, Virus, Common cold, Herbal medicine, Traditional medicine
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Introduction

Common infectious diseases in children include colds, influenza, bronchiolitis, pneumonia, urinary tract infections, sinusitis, skin infections, gastroenteritis, and acute otitis media [1]. Among these, the common cold is one of the most prevalent childhood illnesses [2]. This contagious condition primarily affects the upper respiratory tract, including the nasal cavity [2]. Over 200 viruses can cause the common cold, which is transmitted through contact with contaminated hands, eyes, or nose, as well as through respiratory droplets expelled during sneezing or coughing [3]. Due to the diversity of cold viruses, children may experience multiple colds per year [3]. The common cold is

characterized by viral or microbial infections of the nasal passages, sinuses, and throat [3].

Due to their immature immune systems, children are more susceptible to infectious diseases, including the common cold. Frequent episodes of the common cold are expected in children and are generally not considered serious. When exposed to cold viruses, the developing immune system responds by producing antibodies, enhancing the body's ability to combat future infections. The illness typically resolves within a week, and the incidence of colds can be reduced through adherence to hygienic practices [4]. Common cold symptoms in children include rhinorrhea,

sneezing, cough, fever, irritability, anorexia, dysphagia, chest pain, sore throat, headache, fatigue, and otalgia [5].

The management of common colds in children is influenced by the underlying cause and type of infection. Given the viral etiology of most common colds, specific antiviral medications are generally not indicated. Instead, the primary focus is on supportive care and allowing the illness to resolve spontaneously [6]. Herbal remedies, formulated in modern pharmaceutical forms, can serve as a viable alternative to synthetic drugs, offering improved acceptance and ease of use for children [7-9]. This review aims to identify the herbal medicines traditionally employed in Iranian medicine for the treatment of common colds in pediatric populations.

Methodology

This systematic review was conducted to identify and evaluate the literature on the use of traditional medicine and herbal remedies for treating common colds in children. A comprehensive search was performed using the following keywords: 'common cold,' 'children,' 'traditional medicine,' 'herbal medicine,' and 'treatment.' These terms were carefully selected to ensure comprehensive coverage of the topic. The search encompassed authoritative scientific databases, including Google Scholar, SID, Magiran, and Scopus. Following the initial search, articles were screened for relevance to the study objectives. Studies that did not align with the research question or lacked sufficient information were excluded from the review. The remaining relevant articles were then analyzed to inform the literature review.

Results

Traditional Iranian medicine incorporates a range of herbal remedies for the treatment of common colds in children. Notable examples include *Tilia cordata* (linden), *Glycyrrhiza glabra* (licorice), *Sambucus nigra* (elderberry), *Melaleuca alternifolia* (tea tree oil), *Hyssopus officinalis* (hyssop), *Inula helenium* (elecampane), *Plantago lanceolata* (plantain), *Althea officinalis* (marshmallow), *Eucalyptus globulus* (eucalyptus), *Citrus limonum* (lemon), and *Allium sativum* (garlic). Table 1 provides a detailed overview of these medicinal plants, including their respective plant families, active compounds, and additional relevant information.

Table 1. Medicinal Plants Effective in Treating Children's Colds

Persian name	Scientific name	Herbal family	Bioactive compounds	Ref.
Gavzaban	<i>Tilia Cordata</i>	Tiliaceae	Flavonoids, essential oils	10
Shirinbayan	<i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i>	Fabaceae	Glycyrrhizin, flavonoids	11
Aghti	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Adoxaceae	Anthocyanins, flavonoids	12
Melaleuka	<i>Melaleuca alternifolia</i>	Myrtaceae	Terpenes, monoterpenes	13
Maryamgoli	<i>Hyssopus officinalis</i>	Lamiaceae	Essential oils, flavonoids	14

Zardband	<i>Inula helenium</i>	Asteraceae	Inulin, flavonoids	15
Bagegandomi	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Plantaginaceae	Anthraquinones, anthocyanins	16
Khatmi	<i>Althea officinalis</i>	Malvaceae	Mucilage, flavonoids	17
Okaliptus	<i>Eucalyptus globulus</i>	Myrtaceae	Essential oils, terpenes	18
Limo	<i>Citrus limonum</i>	Rutaceae	Vitamin C, flavonoids	19
Sir	<i>Allium sativum</i>	Amaryllidaceae	Allicin, flavonoids	20

Discussion

Borage (*Borago officinalis*) is renowned for its anti-inflammatory properties and may provide relief from cold symptoms [10]. Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) exhibits antiviral effects and can alleviate coughs and inflammation [11]. Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*) is known to enhance immune function, possess antiviral and anti-inflammatory properties, and is effective in treating colds [12]. Melaleuca alternifolia (tea tree oil) is a plant with antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, and cough-relieving properties [13]. Sage (*Salvia officinalis*) possesses anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, and cough-soothing effects, contributing to the management of colds [14]. Zardband (*Inula helenium*) and wheatgrass leaves (*Triticum aestivum*) have been traditionally used to improve respiratory function, reduce inflammation, and alleviate coughs [15, 16]. Marshmallow (*Althea officinalis*)

is known for its soothing effects on coughs, anti-inflammatory properties, and protective effects on the nasal mucosa [17]. Eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*) is traditionally employed in medicine for its antimicrobial properties, cough relief, and respiratory benefits [18]. Lemon (*Citrus limonum*) is used to boost the immune system and possesses antiviral and anti-inflammatory properties [19]. Garlic (*Allium sativum*) is well-known for its antibacterial, antiviral, and immune-enhancing effects [20]. Plant secondary metabolites, such as alkaloids, flavonoids, and terpenes, have a variety of therapeutic properties. These compounds can be effective in treating conditions like diabetes, inflammation, and cancer. The use of medicinal plants containing these active compounds [21-24] has long been a cornerstone in both traditional and modern medicine for the prevention and treatment of various diseases [25-29].

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Conclusion

The findings of this review suggest that traditional Iranian medicine offers a promising approach to managing common colds in children. Medicinal plants with anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, and immune-boosting properties can effectively alleviate cold symptoms and facilitate recovery. While the use of these natural remedies should be guided by appropriate dosage and professional supervision, they can help minimize the potential side effects associated with synthetic drugs and contribute to the overall well-being of children. In conclusion, the integration of medicinal plants into the treatment of common colds can serve as a valuable adjunct to modern therapeutic strategies, potentially accelerating recovery and reducing symptom severity.

Competing interests:

The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

Ethics approval:

This study was performed in line with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Consent to participate:

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Author contributions:

AZ: Conceptualization, the original draft writing, investigation, writing including reviewing and editing and

Statements and Declarations

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