

Michelle Ramirez

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### **Gotu Kola**

Gotu kola, commonly known as *Centella asiatica*, is an herbaceous, frost-tender perennial plant in the flowering plant family Apiaceae. This product is used mainly as a medicinal herb. Although Gotu kola's labeled use is listed as "Dietary supplement", it is said to have a vast array of medicinal properties; some of which include: antidepressant properties, cardiovascular properties, cognitive properties, sedative and anxiolytic properties, anticonvulsant properties, ect. Available in capsules, tea, topical cream, and extract form, Gotu Kola is native to the wetlands in Asia and is mainly produced for commerce by India and Madagascar. With no oral manifestations, Gotu kola is pegged as the "herb of longevity". Although some studies seem to agree, not enough scientific evidence is present to ascertain any of its advantages. It is also important to note some of the adverse effects listed with Gotu kola- these include: contact dermatitis, headache, upset stomach, and dizziness. In terms of drug interactions, Gotu kola has been shown to inhibit cytochrome P450, 3A4, 2C19 and 2B6, though the extent and or clinical significance is unknown. Contact dermatitis, headache and upset stomach have been listed as possible adverse effects. Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should refrain from the use of Gotu kola. Individuals with a history of a skin disease/cancer, hepatitis or liver disease, should also refrain from use.

It is easy to understand why a product like Gotu kola is and has been of such popularity. Its availability without the need of a medical prescription and its broad spectrum therapeutic

effects, make Gotu kola very attractive to the consumer. Technological advances have made it possible for a consumer to assess any product with a simple click of a button; all while reading reviews and experiments on such. This accessibility, along with the alleged broad spectrum advantages, fewer side effects and at a fraction of the cost of prescription medicine makes consumer much more drawn to this product. Drugs like Phenytoin and Valproic acid, have the ability to be used interchangeably for different therapeutic effects, however, these drugs are of narrow spectrum when compared to Gotu kola, allegedly. From skin to cardiovascular concerns, Gotu kola seems to cover it all.

As a health educator, my main focus is not just on educating, but on accurately doing so. This means that I must equip myself with ample knowledge about natural products with a means to instruct and advise my patients on such topic. Being well equipped means obtaining my information from viable, evidence based and peer reviewed research that has been published on reputable platforms. Verifying my sources means comparing and contrasting different trial results and listening to the personal experience of my patients. Having mastered all of the above, I will have also mastered a proper comfort level in risk assessment of this type of products when conducting a medical review with my patients.

Although Gotu kola does not present with any oral manifestations, a treatment plan would involve a consult with the patient's doctor. This is especially true if a patient is taking Gotu kola despite its contraindications, or if currently experiencing any of its adverse effects. A conversation stressing the importance of understanding that herbal supplements should never replace a doctor-approved treatment, but rather taken in conjunction, would be incorporated in the treatment plan as well.



## References

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Gotu Kola: Uses, Side Effects, Dosage & Drug Interactions

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