

# THERAPEUTIC QUALITIES OF SOLOMON'S SEAL

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Cortesia Solomon's Seal • [www.solomonsseal.net](http://www.solomonsseal.net)

The use of the root of the herb Solomon's Seal (*polygonatum biflorum* or *multiflorum*) dates back over 3,500 years ago to the era of King Solomon. He was so impressed by the plant's diverse healing qualities that he proclaimed it a gift from God, and thus named it after himself. Its more "modern day" acknowledgement was by Dioscorides and Pliny in the 1st Century, A.D. Asian medicine considers it one of the ten top healing plants. Ancient Europeans and North American Indians considered it a "workhorse" herb of wide value. Today, there is increasing interest in the health values of the plant.

Just a partial list of its historical uses demonstrates Solomon's Seal's wide restorative potential. Whereas, the full scientific evidence is not available to make the following claims (China has extensive research unavailable to the Western World), for hundreds of years, the literature has shared benefits people have experienced.



## Solomon's Seal claims:

- Aids in restoration of damaged cartilage & connecting tissue
- Aids in easing general inflammation
- Aids healing of bruises, wounds and skin irritations

- Hastens recovery from bone injuries (broken, stressed) and associated connective tissues
- Encourages the production of synovial fluid to reduce grinding in joints
- Addresses and aids restoration of too tight or too loose tendons, ligaments, joints & attachments associated with repetitive stress, injury & inflammation
- Soothes upset stomach
- Encourages loosening of mucous in lungs
- Improves women's reproductive health

The question remains, however, what makes Solomon's Seal work so well? What are its constituents that, when processed into a tincture, salve, tea or herbal spray, or when combined with those of another herb, empower its healing qualities?

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*I have finally come to view Solomon's Seal as the single most reliable, useful and foolproof remedy that I have ever come across.*

**Matthew Wood — herbalist, author, teacher**

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## **The Main Constituents of Solomon's Seal**

Perhaps the best known, and more commonly understood, components of Solomon's Seal are gum, sugar, starch, pectin, and Vit. A. Responsible for Solomon's Seal's many health activities, however, is a unique *phytocomposition*, as if coming out of a laboratory:

- **steroidal saponins** (Beneficial health effects include control of blood cholesterol levels, bone health, cancer, and building up of the immune system)
- **glycosides** (Cardiac glycosides are an important class of naturally occurring drugs, available in plants, whose actions include both beneficial and toxic effects on the heart. Plants containing cardiac

steroids have been used as poisons and heart drugs at least since 1500 B.C. Throughout history these plants or their extracts have been variously used as arrow poisons, emetics, diuretics, and heart tonics. Cardiac steroids are widely used in the modern treatment of congestive heart failure and for treatment of atrial fibrillation and flutter. Although their toxicity remains a serious problem if taken in large or sustained quantities, in very small doses, as used in tinctures and homeopathy, they are entirely safe)

- **polysaccharides** (The form in which most natural carbohydrates occur. It accounts for the mucilagenous, soothing qualities of a root herb like Solomon's Seal)
- **alkaloids** (A naturally occurring group of chemical compounds. Most of the known functions of alkaloids are related to protection from parasitic bacteria and fungi, as a neurotransmitter, and as a regulator for cell growth and metabolism)
- **anthraquinones** (Anthraquinones are more likely to be present in plants as glycosides owing to the variety of sugar contents and this enhances the range of the compound. Usually anthraquinones are found in the form of aglycone. They are often compounded into a laxative with benefits for digestion and elimination)
- **flavonoids** (Flavonoids, also referred to as bioflavonoids, are polyphenol antioxidants found naturally in plants. Recent research indicates that flavonoids can be nutritionally helpful by triggering enzymes that reduce the risk of certain cancers, heart disease, and age-related degenerative diseases.
- **asparagine** (Asparagine is an essential component of those proteins that are concerned with neuronal development and signaling transmission across nerve endings. Asparagine is essential to all living cells for the production of many proteins)
- **allantoin** (An anti-inflammatory. Allantoin is a chemical compound naturally produced by many organisms, including animals, plants, and bacteria. It is a frequent ingredient in lotions and skin creams, as well as in oral hygiene products, cosmetics, and other toiletries. Allantoin is also

used in medications for dermatological conditions. It is effective at very low concentrations, usually from 0.1% to 2%.)

- **convallarin** (Broadly used in medicine as a heart regulator; it is a white, crystalline glucoside, of an irritating taste, extracted mostly from the convallaria or Lily-of-the-Valley plant, a relative of Solomon's Seal).

From looking at these phytochemical components of the root of Solomon's Seal, we can begin to understand the plant's broad health restorative application. Additionally, it helps explain why it has been used so broadly as a natural healing agent for thousands of years among many cultures.

We can now look at how these components play out in the various uses of Solomon's Seal, be it as a tincture, salve, tea or topical spray. That is, the general restorative properties of Solomon's Seal.

### **General Restorative Properties of Solomon's Seal**

The following information is for educational purposes only. It is not meant to diagnose a condition nor prescribe a treatment. Presently, there is no significant body of scientific evidence that proves the efficacy of Solomon's Seal. The National Institutes of Health in the United States are researching numerous herbs (oregano, clove, rosemary, turmeric, garlic, dandelion, among others, including Solomon's Seal). Research in China about Solomon's Seal, primarily the *odoratum* and *siberian* genus (Asian equivalent of the North American and European *biflorum* and *multiflorum* genus) is generally unavailable for study to the rest of the world.

By looking at the phytochemical composition of an herb, as we did with Solomon's Seal above, an interpretation can be made as to cause and effect, based upon science or observation over time. Many of the components of plants have been so well analyzed that they form the basis for laboratory research and the creation of drugs. Most pharmaceutical drugs begin their creation by integrating knowledge about the known, researched or observed effects of phytochemical chemicals in plants, including micronutrients, enzymes, etc.

Medicines, when prescribed by a doctor, can be characterized by their general and specific effects. Herbs can be seen in a similar way. Herbs, however, when well-prepared, can be more benign overall toward health disharmony, with fewer side effects. Below we have identified numerous restorative uses of Solomon's Seal, according to well-known categories recognized in medicine and herbalism.

### **Mild Sedative**

**Best use: Tincture, Tea.** Soothes nervousness, distress, excitement, or irritation. It can also ease pain or discomfort associated with joint, muscle and connective tissue injuries, bursae, menstrual cramps, bruises, etc.). Has a strengthening, tonic effect.

### **Vulnerary**

**Best use: Salve (poultice), Topical Spray, Tincture.** For external applications, aids wounds (open), cuts, burns, bruises. Aids skin conditions such as rashes. For issues related to tissues, it addresses sprains, strains, inflamed tendons, ligaments, muscles, and joints.

### **Demulcent**

**Best use: Tea, Salve.** As a mucilaginous herb, it is soothing, cooling, and moistening when applied to irritated, inflamed, or abraded tissue, especially mucus membranes, throat, lungs, and skin. Specific to the throat, Solomon's Seal coats it for relief of dry coughs.

### **Tonic**

**Best use: Tincture, Tea.** Restorative by stimulating, invigorating, strengthening, and toning the kidneys, heart, and sexual organs, and soothing the digestive system. Also very beneficial for the skin.

### **Anti-rheumatic**

**Best use: Tincture, Tea, Topical Spray.** Eases pain, inflammation, and

infection in the joints. Connective tissue or joint problems which are not due to excess immune response or disease, but rather to stiffness, coldness, injury, overuse, underuse, excess weight bearing, lack of proper feeding and waste removal in the connective tissue, etc.

### **Adaptogenic**

**Best use: Tincture, Tea.** Helps the body adapt to internal (injuries to bones, connective tissues, joints, etc.) and environmental stresses by strengthening the immune system. By feeding, nourishing, and cleansing irritated joints, bursae and synovial membranes, and damaged tissues, Solomon's Seal, in small doses, may help the excessive immune reaction to normalize. Solomon's Seal works synergistically and is highly effective when combined with other specific herbs such as agrimony, vervain, and many more.

### **Diuretic & Mild Laxative**

**Best use: Tea.** Gently increases the secretion, flow, and expulsion of urine. It promotes the formation of urine by the kidney and may aid in flushing the body of toxins and excess water, and breaking down fat.

### **Anti-inflammatory**

**Best use: Tincture, Tea, Salve, Topical Spray.** The allantoin in Solomon's Seal may help to reduce or counteract inflammations and infections associated with all types of injuries to the muscular-skeletal systems. It may act to produce cortisone in the body that stimulates the production and regulation of necessary synovial fluid in bursae and joints.

### **Expectorant**

**Best use: Tea, Tincture.** May promote the discharge of mucus and phlegm from the lungs and throat by means of spitting or coughing. May reduce irritation in such organs. Among its many effects (and uses in Chinese medicine) as a traditional *yin* tonic for the body's mucous membranes, Solomon's Seal is theorized to moisten and provide energy (*chi* or *qi*) to the lungs, improving breathing and oxygenation to the blood. Better lung function

leads to more abundant metabolic energy. Deficient lung *qi* is characterized by weakness, fatigue, shortness of breath and heart palpitations. Therefore, Solomon's Seal may be helpful for dry coughs. Its immune stimulating and antibiotic effects may also aid in overcoming respiratory infections.

## **Cardiovascular Regulation**

**Best use: Tincture, Tea.** Solomon's Seal is known to have a mild regulating effect on the heart muscle because it contains small, safe amounts of the substance convallarin, a cardio glycoside. Although this is a potent chemical constituent, it seems to be in insufficient quantity to be of concern or use. The National Institutes of Health is currently researching Solomon's Seal's effectiveness in regulating blood pressure. If you are pregnant, have low blood pressure, or are on heart medication, it is not recommended that you use Solomon's Seal without consulting your doctor.

## **PRECAUTIONS OF USE**

Solomon's Seal is safe for most adults when taken for short time periods. As with many herbs and medications, it may cause some side effects such as diarrhea, stomach complaints, and nausea when taken for long time periods or in large doses. The serving size suggested for taking the herb as a tincture or tea have very minimal risk. However, it is sensible to create a protocol that does not create a dependency, such as 6 days of ingestion to 1 day off, or 10-14 days ingestion and 2-3 days off.

- **Pregnancy and breast-feeding:** Not enough is known about the use of Solomon's Seal during pregnancy and breast-feeding. However, as with taking any drug or medication, consultation with a medical practitioner may be appropriate.
- **Diabetes:** Solomon's Seal might decrease blood sugar levels. There is potential that it might interfere with blood sugar control. If you use

Solomon's seal and take diabetes medications, monitor your blood sugar closely. Again, medical consultation may be appropriate.

- **Surgery:** Solomon's Seal might lower blood sugar levels. It might interfere with blood sugar control during and after surgery.



### Potential Drug Interactions

- **Chlorpropamide (Diabinese)** may interact with SOLOMON'S SEAL. Chlorpropamide is used to decrease blood sugar in people with diabetes. Solomon's Seal might also decrease blood sugar. Taking Solomon's seal along with chlorpropamide (Diabinese) might cause your blood sugar to go too low. Monitor your blood sugar closely. The dose of your medication might need to be changed.
- **Insulin** may interact with SOLOMON'S SEAL. Solomon's Seal might decrease blood sugar. Insulin is also used to decrease blood sugar. Taking Solomon's Seal along with insulin might cause your blood sugar to be too low. Monitor your blood sugar closely. The dose of your insulin might need to be changed.
- **Medications for diabetes** (Anti-diabetes drugs) may interact with SOLOMON'S SEAL. Solomon's Seal might decrease blood sugar. Diabetes medications are also used to lower blood sugar. Taking Solomon's Seal along with diabetes medications might cause your blood sugar to go too low. Monitor your blood sugar closely. The dose of your diabetes medication might need to be changed. Some medications used for diabetes include glimepiride (Amaryl), glyburide (DiaBeta, Glynase PresTab, Micronase), insulin, pioglitazone (Actos), rosiglitazone (Avandia), chlorpropamide (Diabinese), glipizide (Glucotrol), tolbutamide (Orinase), and others.

## **An Herbalist's Point of View: [Jim McDonald](#)**

So how does Solomon's Seal work? In treating arthritis and other injuries involving inflammation, I initially believed that the gooey mucilage in the roots finds its way to the enflamed tissues and coats and lubricates them, which reduces friction and irritation and soothes the tissues themselves.

But this really can't be it, as it wasn't long before I learned that a) mucilages aren't extracted by alcohol very well, and the dosage of tincture is far too small for it to be working on a physical level and b) mucilages don't get into the blood stream and thus into joints. Herbalist, [Matthew Wood](#) speculated that Solomon's Seal might stimulate the body to produce cortisone, and my current belief is that it acts on the synovial glands, improving the production of synovial fluid and thus lubrication in the joints - really, this idea isn't too far off from what I initially thought regarding the mucilage, though I had the mechanism wrong. But who knows exactly what's going on; what is clear is that it works, and if that's the case, understanding why isn't entirely necessary (though it can be nice).

Equally remarkable is the dosage needed to obtain such results. I've recommended as little as three to five drops a day, as this is what I learned from Matthew Wood, who is responsible for bringing this obscure herb into popular knowledge. If significant results aren't seen within a week or two, the dose can be upped as needed up to 30 drops three times daily, though I don't know of anyone who's needed to take that much... usually between five and fifteen drops will do the trick; 5 and 10, really. I usually take 7 drops, as I've always been rather fond of that number.

The same mucilage that lubricates joints can loosen mucous in the lungs to treat coughs, as well as intestinal inflammation, and the starchy roots contain sugars that feed healthy bacteria in the intestines.

### **Tincture or Tea?**

Solomon's Seal, taken as a tea, may soothe irritation in the digestive tract, lungs, throat, vagina, and uterus. On the other hand, the tincture is generally superior to the tea for treating sports and repetitive use injuries, and injuries involving tendons, ligaments, muscles, joints, attachments, cartilage, and

bones. In fact, the tincture works to strengthen the entire muscular-skeletal system. However, Solomon's Seal tincture is generally less effective than the tea in preserving the soothing demulcent quality discussed above. Use either the tea or tincture to speed recovery after surgery or the setting of a bone, to rebuild strength and well-being after a fever or the flu, or to aid in keeping a chiropractic adjustment in place.

## **Final Thoughts**

Although Solomon's Seal has many excellent restorative properties, we are not trying to offer you a magic bullet. It works perfectly for some and less well or not at all for others. Time and possibly multiple approaches may be required to heal chronic conditions that have been developing over a number of years. Acute conditions, on the other hand, (such as pneumonia, broken bones, or any serious injury) often require immediate medical intervention. After the initial intervention, however, Solomon's Seal can be a support in the restorative process, such as recovering from surgery or maintaining a chiropractic adjustment.

Each person is different and will have their own unique response to Solomon's Seal. You may experience some level of immediate ease or it may take time to notice any beneficial effects. Please be patient and keep track of your daily use, changing symptoms, and any improvements, even if gradual. When unpleasant symptoms subside, it's easy to forget that we ever had them. Writing things down can make the restorative process a good learning experience.

McGuffin, M. et al. 1997. Botanical Safety Handbook. Boca Raton: CRC Press.

Bensky, D. and A. Gamble. 1986. Chinese Herbal Medicine. Seattle: Eastland Press.

## **Disclaimer:**

The information presented on this website is intended for educational

purposes only. These statements have not been evaluated by the FDA and are not intended to diagnose, cure, treat or prevent disease, illness or distressing conditions. Individual results may vary. It is always advisable to consult with your own health care provider and/or to fully educate yourself as to the benefits and possible complications of any alternative form of treatment.