

Witch Hazel

Witch Hazel is a medicinal plant derived from *Hamamelis virginiana*, a shrub native to North America. It has been traditionally used for centuries for skin care and minor inflammatory conditions. Today, witch hazel extracts are commonly found in cosmetic and pharmaceutical products.

Key facts

- **Scientific name:** *Hamamelis virginiana*
- **Common names:** Witch Hazel
- **Family:** Hamamelidaceae
- **Active compounds:** Tannins, flavonoids, volatile oils
- **Typical forms:** Distilled extracts, creams, ointments, toners

Botanical characteristics

Witch Hazel is a deciduous shrub or small tree with broad leaves and distinctive yellow flowers. The bark, leaves, and twigs are commonly processed into medicinal extracts used for topical applications.

Traditional and modern uses

Traditionally, Witch Hazel has been used for soothing irritated skin, minor wounds, insect bites, hemorrhoids, and inflammation. In modern cosmetic and herbal products, it is frequently used as a skin toner and astringent.

Mechanism and research

The tannins present in Witch Hazel are believed to contribute to its astringent and anti-inflammatory effects. Research suggests that topical preparations may help reduce skin irritation, redness, and mild inflammatory reactions.

Safety and regulation

Witch Hazel is generally considered safe when used topically in moderate amounts. Some individuals may experience mild skin irritation or dryness. Internal use is less common and should be approached cautiously due to tannin content.

Culinary and supplement context

Unlike many medicinal herbs, Witch Hazel is primarily used externally rather than as a food product. It remains widely available in cosmetic, skincare, and over-the-counter herbal formulations worldwide.