

Ma Huang

Latin name: *Ephedra sinica*, *E. equistina*, *E. gerardina*, *E. altissima*, *E. nevadensis*
Family: Ephedraceae

Miscellaneous:

- Several different species (approx. 40) exist, all having the same therapeutic effect.
- Ma Huang is simply the Chinese name for ephedra.
- It is found in numerous “diet” pills/drinks for its energy stimulating and appetite suppressing effect (similar to caffeine).
- North and Central American types are without the potent alkaloids that are responsible for ephedra’s therapeutic benefit (including Mormon Tea’s *E. nevadensis*).¹

Uses:

Nasal decongestant, CNS stimulant, asthma treatment. When used as a β_2 -agonist, ephedra is effective in treating bronchial asthma.

Mechanism:

Ephedrine, ephedra’s primary compound, is responsible for the β_1 - and β_2 -agonist and α_1 -, α_2 -, β_1 -, and β_2 -adrenergic activity.¹ It should be noted that pseudoephedrine, norephedrine, and norpseudoephedrine are contained within the ephedra species.¹

Contraindications/Side effects:

Insomnia, hyperactivity, tachycardia, vasoconstriction, nausea, and irritability. Case reports of seizures, MI, stroke, and death following hi-dose consumption. Contraindicated in BPH patients. Not recommended for patients with diabetes, thyroid disease, hypertension, or heart conditions.

Citation References:

1. Tyler, V., Robbers, J.: *Tyler’s Herbs of Choice: The Therapeutic Use of Phytomedicinals*: 1999, pp. 112-114.

General References:

1. Tyler, V., Robbers, J.: *Tyler’s Herbs of Choice: The Therapeutic Use of Phytomedicinals*: 1999, pp. 112-114.
2. Facts And Comparisons: *Guide To Popular Natural Products*: 1999, pp. 74-75.
3. Duke, J.: *The Green Pharmacy*: 1997, pp. 79-80, 237-238.