

WHITE WILLOW



By MPF

Scientific name

Salix alba

Common names

White willow (The name derives from the white tone to the undersides of the leaves.)

Where found

Native to Europe and western and central Asia.

Therapeutic ingredient

Salicin

Used to treat

Fever, pain and inflammation, and taken in small daily doses may prevent heart attack and stroke.

Hippocrates, who lived sometime between 460 – 377 BCE and who is considered the father of modern medicine, mentions the use of powder made from the bark and leaves of the willow tree to ease headaches, pains and fevers; this remedy is also mentioned in texts from other ancient cultures.

In 1763 a vicar from Chipping Norton in Oxfordshire, England, Reverend Edmund Stone, noted that willow bark, when mashed up in alcohol to produce a tincture, was effective in reducing a fever.

During the early 19th century, European chemists created aspirin from the bark's active chemical, salicin. Aspirin hit the market for the first time in 1899, and within a few years, it was one of the most popular drugs on earth.

Recent studies show that taking about half an aspirin a day can significantly reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke by reducing the likelihood of the internal blood clots that trigger these medical emergencies. Studies of aspirin's effectiveness have not been duplicated for the raw willow bark, since it is not possible to predict how much salicin a particular sample of bark will contain.