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Тезис

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The term 'herbal medicine' implies that only herbs are used in this form of medicine. In practice, herbal medicine could better be described as a plant-based medicine, since it includes the use of all forms of plant life, such as tree bark, roots, flowers etc.

Herbal medicine must be differentiated from conventional medicine, which uses synthetically made chemical versions of natural ingredients to fight disease.

Herbs contain many ingredients, and they may work together to produce a beneficial effect. The effectiveness of a herb is determined by many factors, including the type of environment (climate, soil) in which a plant grew, as well as how and when it was harvested and processed.

The action of a plant is determined by active substances which are contained in its various parts:

- Flavonoids are the most important antioxidants, which protect cells from oxidative processes, strengthen the walls of blood vessels, relieve inflammation and muscle spasms.
- Essential oils. They give plants their unique aromas, and also have antiseptic properties. Inhalation of essential oils has beneficial effect during periods of stress. They also help to stimulate appetite and improve blood circulation.
- Alkaloids are needed to fight with bacteria and fungi.
- Mucus. Mucous substances which are contained in herbs contribute to good intestinal peristalsis and soothe the irritation of the mucous membranes, such as throat, intestines, etc.
- Tannins. These substances contribute to healing of wounds and accelerate the healing of the mucous membranes.

There is an opinion that herbal medicine is absolutely safe and harmless, and can be used without restrictions and medical control. But this carelessness is dangerous, because among medicinal plants, even widely used, there are a lot of poisonous ones. But sometimes their toxicity creates useful action which is determined by an accurate dosage.

There are some advantages and disadvantages associated with herbal medicines as opposed to pharmaceutical products. Advantages of using herbs include: reduced risk of side effects, effectiveness with chronic conditions, lower cost and widespread availability. Disadvantages of herbal medicines include: lack of dosage instructions, lack of legal regulation, interaction with pharmaceutical medications and risk of poisoning.

**Key words**

herbal medicine, herbs, natural ingredients