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## **ALFALFA COMPLEX**

One of the first products Dr. Shaklee introduced when he formed the company in 1956 was a tablet made using high-quality alfalfa powder derived from the aerial parts (leaves and stem materials) of mature alfalfa plants. Now called **Alfalfa Complex**, to recognize that there are multiple nutrients in alfalfa, it continues to be one of our most popular original products.

Alfalfa is a member of the legume family (like peas, peanuts, and beans), and was recognized in the Middle East as “the father of all foods” for its value in increasing the speed and strength of horses that were fed alfalfa as fodder. Because the alfalfa plant puts down a deep root system, it’s able to absorb many minerals that other plants do not – so it’s much richer in many trace minerals than other vegetables. It also contains almost 50% protein.

People have used dried alfalfa powder as a tea or in tablets and capsules for decades; however, little scientific information is available to substantiate many of its traditional uses.

### **Official Recognition by Health Canada**

Health Canada’s Natural Health Products Directorate recognizes alfalfa as an ingredient of traditional herbal medicines, and has recently finalized a product monograph for it. While the original draft monograph indicated a number of uses for alfalfa (such as digestive tonic, appetite stimulant, treatment for indigestion, relief of pain from arthritis, and promotion of appetite and weight gain), the revised monograph only allows claims for alfalfa as a “nutritive tonic.”

The Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration defines nutritive tonics as substances that have a nourishing, supportive, or strengthening effect on the body. In herbal medicine, tonics are defined as herbs that produce a restorative action. The action of tonics can be slow and their benefits usually increase over time. Tonics can be used in almost any condition, and to support any body system. They’re particularly indicated where a person is debilitated by prolonged exertion, stress, or infection, and are valuable agents for the relief of fatigue or exhaustion from any cause.

### **Daily Dosage**

When alfalfa has been used traditionally in herbal medicine, the daily dosage has been 9 grams to 30 g of dried aerial parts. Since each Shaklee **Alfalfa Complex** tablet contains 300 mg of alfalfa powder, you would need 30 tablets to achieve a 9 g per day dose. Our labels, therefore, recommend taking 10 tablets three times a day. But feel free to consult a health care practitioner if you wish to take a different dosage (larger or smaller to suit your needs).

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## **Risk Information**

Health Canada's monograph requires that manufacturers list certain risk statements on the labels of alfalfa-containing products. These are explained below.

### Cautions and Warnings

*Consult a health care practitioner prior to use if you are taking blood thinners.*

Alfalfa naturally contains vitamin K, a fat-soluble vitamin that's able to "thicken" your blood. Each **Alfalfa Complex** tablet contains about 5 mcg of vitamin K, so if you were to take 30 tablets per day, this would be 150 mcg of vitamin K, which could possibly interfere with any blood-thinning medication you might be taking. By letting your health care practitioner know how much alfalfa you're taking, he or she will be able to adjust your dosage of blood-thinning medication accordingly.

*Consult a health care practitioner prior to use if you are undergoing hormone replacement therapy (HRT) or taking birth control medication.*

Specific compounds in alfalfa, such as coumestrol, may act like estrogen in the body. When taken at the same time as HRT or oral contraceptives, alfalfa might interfere with the way the body uses the drugs. As a result, HRT or oral contraceptives may not be as effective as intended, some women may experience increased side effects, and the risk of an unintended pregnancy may be very slightly higher.

### Contraindications

*Do not use if you have a history of systemic lupus erythematosus.*

In studies, laboratory monkeys that regularly ate alfalfa seeds developed a condition resembling systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE). A few case reports of lupus-like symptoms in humans who ate alfalfa tablets have also been published and are attributed to a naturally occurring compound called L-canavanine, found primarily in alfalfa seeds and sprouts, and possibly in trace amounts in the aerial parts of mature plants. As a result, persons with SLE are advised not to use alfalfa products.

*Do not use if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.*

This is a general statement required for most natural health products sold in Canada, and exists because clinical studies to assess the safety of most herbal ingredients have not been performed on women who are either pregnant or breastfeeding. To remain on the safe side, don't use **Alfalfa Complex** while pregnant or breastfeeding.

Shaklee **Alfalfa Complex** tablets contain premium, chemical-free alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*) leaf and stem powder, and are flavoured with natural spearmint (*Mentha spicata*) leaf oil.