

QUESTION OF THE WEEK**Q:** What are the health benefits of marigolds?

Marigolds — *calendula officinales* — are those pretty but unpleasant smelling flowers we plant in our gardens to deter insects and rabbits from invading our vegetables. But like so many other plants we love for their beauty, marigolds have significant medicinal properties.

Studies show marigold flavanoids to have antimicrobial effects against staph, but the most impressive features of the flower are its anti-inflammatory and wound-healing properties. Calendula cream or ointment, made from the flower, promotes granulation and collagen formation — an important step in wound healing. Women undergoing radiation for breast cancer

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who were treated with calendula ointment showed marked reduction in radiation dermatitis, if used before treatment. Those who already had moderate to severe radiation burns had more significant pain and inflammation relief than the test group treated with topical steroidal prescriptions.

There are many other anecdotal uses for calendula, but the European

Joint Commission E on Herbal Medicine has endorsed calendula use for wounds, burns and inflammation of the mouth and throat.

Calendula cream is readily available in most health food stores. A tea for sore throats or gastritis can be made by steeping two teaspoons of dried flowers in a cup of water for 10 to 15 minutes, and taken three times a day.

Make sure your marigold is *calendula officinales*. Also be certain that your marigold is pesticide-free.

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