



EUROPEAN MEDICINES AGENCY
SCIENCE MEDICINES HEALTH

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Butcher's broom

Ruscus aculeatus L., rhizoma

This is a summary of the scientific conclusions reached by the Committee on Herbal Medicinal Products (HMPC) on the medicinal uses of butcher's broom. The HMPC conclusions are taken into account by EU Member States when evaluating applications for the licensing of herbal medicines containing butcher's broom.

This summary is not intended to provide practical advice on how to use medicines containing butcher's broom. For practical information about using butcher's broom medicines, patients should read the package leaflet that comes with the medicine or contact their doctor or pharmacist.

What is butcher's broom?

Butcher's broom is the common name for the root of the plant *Ruscus aculeatus* L.

The HMPC conclusions only cover butcher's broom preparations that are obtained by drying and powdering the roots and by putting the plant material in a solvent (such as ethanol) to dissolve compounds and form a liquid extract. The solvent is then evaporated to obtain a dry extract.

Herbal medicines containing these butcher's broom preparations are usually available in solid forms to be taken by mouth.

Butcher's broom preparations may also be found in combination with other herbal substances in some herbal medicines. These combinations are not covered in this summary.

What are the HMPC conclusions on its medicinal uses?

The HMPC concluded that, on the basis of its long-standing use, these butcher's broom preparations can be used to relieve discomfort and heaviness of legs related to minor problems of blood circulation, and to relieve itching and burning of haemorrhoids (piles), after a medical doctor has ruled out serious conditions.

Butcher's broom medicines should only be used in adults. If symptoms last longer than 2 weeks or worsen while taking the medicine, the patient should see a doctor or a qualified healthcare practitioner. Detailed instructions on how to take butcher's broom medicines and who can use them can be found in the package leaflet that comes with the medicine.

Official address Domenico Scarlattilaan 6 • 1083 HS Amsterdam • The Netherlands

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What evidence supports the use of butcher's broom medicines?

The HMPC conclusions on the use of these butcher's broom medicines for minor blood circulation problems and for haemorrhoid symptoms are based on their 'traditional use'. This means that, although there is insufficient evidence from clinical trials, the effectiveness of these herbal medicines is plausible and there is evidence that they have been used safely in this way for at least 30 years (including at least 15 years within the EU). Moreover, the intended use does not require medical supervision.

In its assessment, the HMPC also considered a study involving 166 women with minor blood circulation problems treated with butcher's broom for 12 weeks. Foot and lower leg swelling was reduced to a greater extent in women taking butcher's broom than in those on placebo (a dummy treatment), but the overall benefit was not convincing. Also, because the study did not include men and it was of short duration, firm conclusions could not be drawn about the effectiveness of butcher's broom. No studies in patients with haemorrhoids have been carried out with butcher's broom. Therefore, the HMPC conclusions on the use of these medicines are based on their long-standing use.

For detailed information on the studies assessed by the HMPC, see the HMPC assessment report under the section 'Documents' on the Agency's website: ema.europa.eu/medicines/herbal/rusci-aculeati-rhizoma.

What are the risks associated with butcher's broom medicines?

At the time of the HMPC assessment, no side effects had been reported with these medicines.

Further information on the risks associated with these butcher's broom medicines, including the appropriate precautions for their safe use, can be found in the monograph under the section 'Documents' on the Agency's website: ema.europa.eu/medicines/herbal/rusci-aculeati-rhizoma.

How are butcher's broom medicines approved in the EU?

Any applications for the licensing of medicines containing butcher's broom have to be submitted to the national authorities responsible for medicinal products, which will assess the application for the herbal medicine and take into account the scientific conclusions of the HMPC.

Information on the use and licensing of butcher's broom medicines in EU Member States should be obtained from the relevant national authorities.

Other information about butcher's broom medicines

Further information on the HMPC assessment of butcher's broom medicines, including details of the Committee's conclusions, can be found under the section 'Documents' on the Agency's website: ema.europa.eu/medicines/herbal/rusci-aculeati-rhizoma. For more information about treatment with butcher's broom medicines, read the package leaflet that comes with the medicine or contact your doctor or pharmacist.