



EUROPEAN MEDICINES AGENCY  
SCIENCE MEDICINES HEALTH

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## Herbal medicine: summary for the public

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### Iceland moss

*Certraria islandica* (L.) Acharius s.l., thallus

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

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

#### **What is Iceland moss?**

Iceland moss is the common name for the thallus of the lichen *Cetraria islandica* (L.) Acharius s.l.

The HMPC conclusions only cover Iceland moss preparations which are obtained by drying and comminuting (reducing into tiny pieces) the thallus or by putting the plant material in a solvent (such as ethanol or water) to dissolve compounds and form a liquid extract. The solvent may then be partially evaporated to obtain a soft extract.

Herbal medicines containing these Iceland moss preparations are usually available as herbal tea to be drunk and in solid or liquid forms to be taken by mouth or applied to the lining of the mouth.

Iceland moss 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 Iceland moss preparations can be used as a demulcent (soothing agent) for treating mouth and throat irritation and associated dry cough, as well as to treat temporary loss of appetite.

Iceland moss medicines should only be used in adults for treating temporary loss of appetite. As a demulcent, Iceland moss medicines may be used in adults, adolescents and children over 6 years of age. If symptoms last longer than one week or worsen while taking the medicine, a doctor or a



qualified healthcare practitioner should be consulted. Detailed instructions on how to take Iceland moss medicines and who can use them can be found in the package leaflet that comes with the medicine.

### **What evidence supports the use of Iceland moss medicines?**

The HMPC conclusions on the use of these Iceland moss medicines for use as a demulcent and for loss of appetite 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 clinical studies involving patients with inflammation of the mouth and throat. Although a possible effect in improving symptoms was observed, few patients were included in the studies and Iceland moss was not compared with placebo (a dummy treatment). Therefore, the HMPC conclusions on the use of these Iceland moss medicines as demulcents are based on their long-standing use.

Regarding the use of Iceland moss medicines for loss of appetite, the HMPC considered this use to be plausible due to the bitter taste of lichen acids which are a component of Iceland moss.

For detailed information on the studies assessed by the HMPC, see the HMPC assessment report.

### **What are the risks associated with Iceland moss 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 Iceland moss medicines, including the appropriate precautions for their safe use, can be found in the monograph under the tab 'All documents' on the Agency's website: [ema.europa.eu/Find medicine/Herbal medicines for human use](http://ema.europa.eu/Find%20medicine/Herbal%20medicines%20for%20human%20use).

### **How are Iceland moss medicines approved in the EU?**

Any applications for the licensing of medicines containing Iceland moss 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 Iceland moss medicines in EU Member States should be obtained from the relevant national authorities.

### **Other information about Iceland moss medicines**

Further information on the HMPC assessment of Iceland moss medicines, including details of the Committee's conclusions, can be found under the tab 'All documents' on the Agency's website: [ema.europa.eu/Find medicine/Herbal medicines for human use](http://ema.europa.eu/Find%20medicine/Herbal%20medicines%20for%20human%20use). For more information about treatment with Iceland moss medicines, read the package leaflet that comes with the medicine or contact your doctor or pharmacist.