

# White Willow Bark

## For Pain & Inflammation



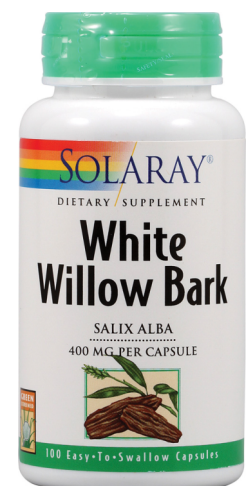
The bark of the White Willow tree (*Salix alba*) is one of the oldest folk remedies used for treating pain.

The tree thrives in damp conditions, and is native to Europe. The bark has been used medicinally for thousands of years in Africa, Asia and in North America. European settlers imported the tree to North America, where they found that Native Americans were already using various species of the plant for treating pain and fever.

Throughout history, and across many cultures, the bark of the white willow tree has been used to treat inflammation. Like many herbal remedies, it has also been used historically for treating more unusual ailments. Nicholas Culpeper, author of the famous book “Culpeper's Complete Herbal,” written in 1652, once stated that the ashes of willow bark might be “mixed with vinegar, [to] take away warts, corns and superfluous flesh.” In 1828, the extract of the white willow bark, called salicin, after the Latin name *Salix*, was isolated as an analgesic (pain reducer). In 1807, Felix Hoffman developed the acetylated form, known today as salicylic acid. Commercially, salicylic acid took the form of aspirin, invented by a chemist with the German *Bayer Company*. It was one of the most successful drugs in the history of medicine.

The main constituent of white willow bark is salicin; it works on the same physiological pathways as aspirin does in the body, as a COX and prostaglandin inhibitor (inflammation reduction).

The tree itself grows up to 80 feet tall and the bark, fresh or dried, is used as medicine in some cultures, even today. It is considered anti-fever, anti-rheumatic, analgesic and anti-inflammatory. Additionally white willow is used today as a remedy for arthritis, rheumatic pain, swelling, headache, high fever, night sweats, allergies, nerve pain, menstrual cramps, toothache and general inflammation. The tree grows locally in the Boston area and can be seen around New England. White willow bark can be used to treat the body in the same way that aspirin does, without some of the common side effects of aspirin.



When taking white willow bark, use caution with peptic ulcer, liver or renal disease or if you have an allergy to aspirin. Also, avoid if pregnant; do not use with children with Reye's syndrome.