



DOSSIER · SUBSTANCE

Rock Rose (Cistus)

The rock rose is a Mediterranean shrub; human studies examined extracts, tea and mouth rinses, with indications of symptom relief in respiratory infections.

239

STUDIES IN
TOTAL

11

IN HUMANS

3

OF WHICH
CONTROLLED

14

IN ANIMALS

61

IN THE LAB

Figures from the IHR study database · Last updated 2026-10-15

How to Read This Dossier

ESTABLISHED

measured in humans, with a comparison group

PLAUSIBLE

supported by mechanism, animal studies or observation

HYPOTHESIS

a likely connection that still needs to be tested

Rock Rose (Cistus) at a Glance

- A randomized controlled trial in patients with upper respiratory tract infections found a more pronounced reduction in symptoms with a rock rose extract as a lozenge than with placebo ¹.
- In the same study, C-reactive protein decreased in the extract group ¹.
- A randomized controlled trial found less gum bleeding, inflammation and pain with a chewing gum containing extracts of Cistus x incanus and Scutellaria lateriflora than with placebo ²; the contribution of the rock rose cannot be separated.
- A randomized controlled trial with a mouth rinse made from Cystus tea found no difference from sage tea mouth rinse for mucositis, oral mucosa and tolerability ³.
- A pilot study without a control group in healthy adults reported changes in blood lipids and oxidation markers after rock rose tea ⁴.

We evaluated 4 human studies on Rock rose (Cistus), including 3 randomised controlled trials and 0 meta-analyses or systematic reviews; the controlled studies include 280 participants in total. As of 3 October 2026.

1. What Is Rock Rose (Cistus)? Occurrence, Origin and Forms

Rock rose (Cistus) is a shrub of the Mediterranean region; for tea and supplements mainly Cistus incanus (also Cistus creticus) is used. The leaves and twigs are rich in polyphenols, and the plant secretes a fragrant resin, labdanum.

Rock roses grow on dry, sunny slopes around the Mediterranean, for example in Greece, on Crete and in Turkey. The leaves and young shoots are used.

Products include dried herb for tea, extracts, lozenges and mouth rinses.

Forms and Preparations Studied

- Tea from the leaves and shoots
- Extracts, for example as lozenges
- Mouth rinses
- Combination products with rock rose – the other ingredients are named in each case

Not covered on this page:

- Ecological and plant research on rock roses (wildfire, soil, germination)

2. What Does Rock Rose (Cistus) Do? Results by Area

AREA	RESULT IN CONTROLLED STUDIES	STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE	STUDIES	PARTICIPANTS
Mouth, teeth and gums	mostly no difference	low	0 meta-analyses · 2 controlled · 0 other	120
Colds and respiratory tract	mostly improved	low	0 meta-analyses · 1 controlled · 0 other	160
Immune defence and inflammation	mostly improved	low	0 meta-analyses · 1 controlled · 0 other	160
Other outcomes	observational data only	unclear	0 meta-analyses · 0 controlled · 1 other	0

How to read the table: counted are human studies whose results concern the area. "High" means at least one meta-analysis and two controlled studies showing improvement, or at least three controlled studies of which three quarters show improvement, with at least 300 participants in total. "Moderate" means at least two controlled studies showing improvement, as a majority, or one meta-analysis alongside controlled studies. "Low" means one controlled study showing improvement. Where an area has no controlled study, the strength of evidence is at most "low" (result "reviews only" or "observational data only"). Everything else is "unclear". A study counts as showing improvement when at least half of its outcomes in this area improved. Reviews of combination products do not count as meta-analyses; results that only describe side effects or shares of users do not count as an effect. The same study is counted only once.

3. What the Studies Show in Detail

Rock Rose (Cistus), Mouth, Teeth and Gums: Human Studies

For the mouth and gums, the picture is mixed: a combination product was better than placebo ², a tea mouth rinse was not better than sage tea ³. A randomized controlled trial in adults with gingivitis found improvements in gum bleeding, gum inflammation, oral health, pain and disease severity for a chewing gum with extracts of Cistus x incanus and Scutellaria lateriflora compared with a placebo chewing gum ²; since the mixture contains two plants, the contribution of the rock rose cannot be separated. The strength of evidence is low: only two controlled studies with a total of 120 participants are available, no meta-analysis, and the forms studied are a combination product chewing gum and a mouth rinse made from tea, not tea as a drink. It remains open whether the rock rose alone – for example as tea from Cistus incanus or Cistus creticus – has a benefit for the mouth and gums.

STUDY	DESIGN · PARTICIPANTS	PREPARATION · DOSE · DURATION · COMPARISON
² Di et al. 2024	randomised controlled · 60 participants	Chewing gum with Cistus x incanus and Scutellaria lateriflora extracts; two chewing gums daily; 3 months; vs. placebo chewing gum
³ Ebert et al. 2021	randomised controlled · 60 participants	Cystus® tea (Naturprodukte Dr. Pandalis) as mouthwash; daily mouthwash during therapy; vs. sage tea mouthwash

Rock Rose (Cistus), Colds and Respiratory Tract: Human Studies

In a randomized controlled study with 160 patients with upper respiratory tract infections, symptoms decreased more clearly with an extract of rock rose than with placebo ¹. The extract form was studied, for example as a lozenge. The evidence is low because only one controlled study is available; details on the species studied and the duration of use are open.

STUDY	DESIGN · PARTICIPANTS	PREPARATION · DOSE · DURATION · COMPARISON	RESULT
¹ Kalus et al. 2009	randomised controlled · 160 participants	Cistus extract CYSTUS052; vs. Placebo	Score of subjective symptoms: improved (decreased significantly)

Rock Rose (Cistus), Immune Defence and Inflammation: Human Studies

In a randomized controlled study of 160 patients with upper respiratory tract infections, C-reactive protein decreased in the group with Cistus extract; the summary does not mention a comparison with placebo ¹. An extract of rock rose was studied, not the tea from leaves and shoots. The evidence is low because only this one controlled study is available; details on manufacturer funding are missing. Further controlled studies on immune defense and inflammation, including on other preparations such as tea or mouth rinses, are still pending.

STUDY	DESIGN · PARTICIPANTS	PREPARATION · DOSE · DURATION · COMPARISON	RESULT
¹ Kalus et al. 2009	randomised controlled · 160 participants	Cistus extract CYSTUS052; vs. Placebo	C-reactive protein: improved (decreased significantly)

Rock Rose (Cistus): Further Outcomes in Studies

For rock rose as a tea from leaves and shoots (Cistus incanus), a study in healthy adults found improvements in HDL cholesterol, triglycerides, malondialdehyde and advanced oxidation protein products ⁴. It was a pilot study without a control group with measurements before and after use ⁴. The evidence is therefore unclear because no controlled or randomized studies are available for these measurements. It remains open whether the observed changes can be confirmed in controlled studies.

STUDY	DESIGN · PARTICIPANTS	PREPARATION · DOSE · DURATION · COMPARISON	RESULT
⁴ Kuchta et al. 2021	study · 24 participants	Cistus incanus herbal tea (infusion); 12 weeks; vs. no control (pilot, before/after)	HDL cholesterol: improved (D4%, p = 0.033); triglycerides: improved (D4%, p = 0.033)

4. How Is Rock Rose (Cistus) Dosed? Preparation, Dose and Duration in Studies

The studies examined a Cistus extract as a lozenge for respiratory infections ¹, a chewing gum with extracts of Cistus x incanus and Scutellaria lateriflora for gingivitis ², and a mouth rinse made from Cystus tea in patients with head and neck cancer undergoing radio(chemo)therapy ³. In a pilot study, tea made from leaves and shoots of Cistus incanus was tested as a drink ⁴. The doses and durations of use are shown in the table.

PREPARATION OR FORM	DOSE	DURATION	STUDY
Chewing gum with Cistus x incanus and Scutellaria lateriflora extracts	two chewing gums daily	3 months	²

PREPARATION OR FORM	DOSE	DURATION	STUDY
Cystus® tea (Naturprodukte Dr. Pandalis) as mouthwash	—	daily mouthwash during therapy	³

5. Is Rock Rose (Cistus) Safe? Side Effects in Studies

In the study with the mouth rinse made from Cystus tea, the tea was well tolerated, without significant differences from the comparison rinse ³. In the study on the chewing gum with Cistus × incanus and Scutellaria lateriflora, tolerability was examined but not reported ². Details on reported side effects are shown in the table.

STUDY	REPORTED SIDE EFFECTS
² Di et al. 2024	tolerability assessed but not reported
³ Ebert et al. 2021	tea tolerability without significant differences, well tolerated

6. What Remains Open: Limits of the Evidence

- For the lozenge, chewing gum and mouth rinse, only one controlled study each is available; for tea as a drink, none.
- The contribution of the rock rose in combination products cannot be separated from the other ingredients.
- Information on the species studied and the duration of use is missing in several studies.
- Information on manufacturer funding is missing.
- For blood lipids and oxidation markers, there is only one pilot study without a control group.

7. Bottom Line: What Is Established About Rock Rose (Cistus)

The rock rose is studied as tea, extract, mouth rinse and in combination products. In humans, a randomized controlled trial in upper respiratory tract infections shows an improvement in the symptom score and a decrease in C-reactive protein with an extract as a lozenge ¹. In gum inflammation, a chewing gum with rock rose and Scutellaria lateriflora was better than placebo in a randomized controlled trial, but the share of the rock rose remains open ². A mouth rinse made from Cystus tea showed no difference from sage tea mouth rinse for mucositis, oral mucosa and tolerability ³.

The strength of evidence is consistently low: there is no meta-analysis, and most results come from individual controlled studies with small groups.

Frequently Asked Questions

How well has Rock rose (Cistus) been studied in humans?

We evaluated 4 human studies on Rock rose (Cistus), including 3 randomised controlled trials and 0 meta-analyses or systematic reviews; the controlled studies include 280 participants in total. As of 3 October 2026.

Does Rock rose (Cistus) help with mouth, teeth and gums? What the studies show

We evaluated 2 controlled studies; the controlled studies include 120 participants in total. Result of the controlled studies: mostly no difference. Strength of evidence under our published rules: low. Sources: ²³

Does Rock rose (Cistus) help with colds and respiratory tract? What the studies show

We evaluated one controlled study; the controlled studies include 160 participants in total. Result of the controlled studies: mostly improved. Strength of evidence under our published rules: low. Sources: ¹

Does Rock rose (Cistus) help with immune defence and inflammation? What the studies show

We evaluated one controlled study; the controlled studies include 160 participants in total. Result of the controlled studies: mostly improved. Strength of evidence under our published rules: low. Sources: ¹

Against what was the rock rose studied in human studies?

Upper respiratory tract infections, gingivitis and the oral mucosa in patients with head and neck cancer undergoing radio(chemo)therapy were studied. A randomized controlled trial found an improvement in the symptom score and a decrease in C-reactive protein with an extract as a lozenge ¹.

How strong is the strength of evidence of the studies on rock rose?

The strength of evidence is low. Only individual controlled studies with small groups are available, and there is no meta-analysis. Controlled studies are missing for several forms and outcome measures.

Which preparations were used in the studies?

A Cistus extract as a lozenge ¹, a chewing gum with extracts of Cistus × incanus and Scutellaria lateriflora ², a mouth rinse made from Cistus tea ³ and, in a pilot study, tea made from leaves and shoots of Cistus incanus as a drink ⁴ were tested. The doses are shown in the table.

What is known about tolerability?

In the study with the mouth rinse made from Cistus tea, the tea was well tolerated, without significant differences from the comparison rinse ³. In the study on the chewing gum with Cistus × incanus and Scutellaria lateriflora, tolerability was examined but not reported ². Details are shown in the table.

Can a benefit of the rock rose alone be derived from the studies?

For the extract as a lozenge in upper respiratory tract infections, a randomized controlled trial reports improvements ¹. For the chewing gum with Cistus × incanus and Scutellaria lateriflora, the contribution of the rock rose cannot be separated from that of the second plant ². Whether the rock rose alone – for example as tea – has a benefit remains open.

Sources

1

Cistus incanus (CYSTUS052) for treating patients with infection of the upper respiratory tract. A prospective, randomised, placebo-controlled clinical study
Kalus U, Grigorov A, Kadecki O, Jansen JP, Kiesewetter H, Radtke H · 2009

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Efficacy and Tolerability of a Scutellaria lateriflora L. and Cistus × incanus L.-Based Chewing Gum on the Symptoms of Gingivitis: A Monocentric, Randomized, Double-Blind, Placebo-Controlled Clinical Trial
Di Minno A, Ullah H, De Lellis LF, Buccato DG, Baldi A, Cuomo P et al. · 2024

3

Results of a randomized controlled phase III trial: efficacy of polyphenol-containing cystus® tea mouthwash solution for the reduction of mucositis in head and neck cancer patients undergoing external beam radiotherapy
Ebert N, Kensche A, Löck S, Hadiwikarta WW, Hänsch A, Dörr W et al. · 2021

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The effect of Cistus incanus herbal tea supplementation on oxidative stress markers and lipid profile in healthy adults
Kuchta A, Konopacka A, Waleron K, Viapiana A, Wesolowski M, Dąbkowski K et al. · 2021

International Health Research

Research, put in context. Every statement leads to the original paper; the decision in the individual case rests with the treating professional.
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