Blue Cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*)

**Parts used and where grown:** The roots of this flower are used medicinally. Blue cohosh grows throughout North America. Blue cohosh is not related to black cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*); however, both herbs are primarily used to treat women’s health problems.

**Historical or traditional use** (may or may not be supported by scientific studies): Native Americans are believed to have used blue cohosh flowers to induce labor and menstruation.¹ Turn-of-the-century physicians in the United States who treated with natural remedies (known as Eclectic physicians) used blue cohosh for these same purposes and also to treat kidney infections, arthritis, and other ailments.

**Active constituents:** A saponin from blue cohosh called caulosaponin is believed to stimulate uterine contractions.² Several other alkaloids may be active in this herb; however, current research about the active constituents of blue cohosh is insufficient.

**How much is usually taken?** Blue cohosh is generally taken as a tincture and should be limited to no more than 1–2 ml taken three times per day. The average single amount of the whole herb is 300–1,000 mg.³ Blue cohosh is generally used in combination with other herbs.
Are there any side effects or interactions? Large amounts of blue cohosh can cause nausea, headaches, and high blood pressure. Blue cohosh should only be used under medical supervision and in limited amounts. Use during pregnancy has been brought into question with a recent report of an infant born with congestive heart failure following use of blue cohosh by the mother.4

References: