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## **Leki roślinne stosowane w leczeniu Fryderyka Chopina**

### **Herbal remedies used in the treatment of Frederic Chopin's illness**

#### SUMMARY

Frederic Chopin's life and work as a composer and pianist were dominated by various diseases. Chopin was plagued by health problems throughout all his life. Over 30 doctors advised him on his ailments, among them supporters of both alleopathy and homeopathy. Since his earliest childhood, Chopin received medical advice and consultations, took various medications and visited health resorts. His therapy included salt and cork oak baths, drinking of sulphate and bicarbonate waters, the use of leeches, mustard plasters and plasters with cantharidin. Chopin used to take mainly herbal medicines. At the beginning of his therapy, these were mild medications containing i.a. the *Thymus L.*, the *Viola arvensis*, the *Asperula* and the *Flos Malvae silvestris*. As other cures against his disorders, he also used to take strong medicaments containing the *Digitalis*, the *Atropa belladonna L.*, the quinine sulphate and the opium. The following herbs are mild mucolytic agents: the *Thymus L.*, the *Viola arvensis*, the *Asperula* and the *Tilia* tea. When one considers the symptoms that were present in Chopin, the use of the above mentioned herbs seems to have been the right choice. In order to treat his stomach disorders, the doctors advised the composer to take medications containing the *Atropa belladonna*. In the last ten years of his life, Chopin took medicines containing the opium – these were drops and the medicine sulphate. The opium is a strong narcotic drug that has analgesic, antitussive and spasmodic properties. The so called phials that were used by the composer included also – apart from the opium – the quinine sulphate that is both an analgesic and an antipyretic. There are following side effects of the use of the quinine sulphate: an increased susceptibility to bleeding, skin allergic reactions and fever. Another important drug – as far as the probable illness of Chopin is concerned – was the *Lichen islandicus* which contains polysaccharides, mucilaginous constituents and lichen acids having antiseptic properties against i.a. the *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. Chopin also used to take medications containing the *Digitalis L.* It is a herb that has both cardiac and diuretic properties. Apart from herbal medicines, the doctors advised Frederic to take arsenic salts as well as the calcium and the potassium iodide. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the arsenic was the basic medicine used in the treatment of various ailments. However, today it is known that arsenic compounds have protoplasmic and carcinogenic properties. They can cause skin, lung or liver cancer. None of the attempts to heal the composer either by means of medical interventions, medications or quasi-medications had any expected therapeutic effect.

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