

**THE
AMAZING
ST. JOHN'S WORT**

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IMPORTANT

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Biological Name

Hypericum Perforatum

Other Names

Johnswort, Amber, Touch-and-heal, Goat Weed, Hardhay,
Klamath Weed, Rosin Rose, Hypericum, Tipton Weed,
and St. John's Wort

Parts Used

Tops and flowers

Introduction

Ancient Greeks believed that the fragrance of St. John's Wort would cause evil spirits to flee; and the plant was believed to have magical powers.

In ancient Greece, the herb was used to treat many ailments, including sciatica, and poisonous reptile bites.

In Europe the herb was used for the topical treatment of wounds and burns; and it was also a folk remedy for kidney and lung ailments, as well as for depression.

Although not always well known outside of Europe, researchers in Europe have been studying St. John's Wort for decades. Moreover, Doctors in Germany have been prescribing it for depression, and insurance companies have been paying for it. Hypericum is now the number one antidepressant,

natural or synthetic, prescribed by German physicians. In Germany, in the year 2000, Hypericum accounted for over 50 percent of the antidepressant market, while Prozac was down to 2 percent.

Today, St. John's Wort is readily available in health and herb shops; and recently it has been in greater demand as its effectiveness becomes more widely known.

Clinical Studies

St. John's Wort contains hypericin which inhibits monoamine oxidase, a neuro chemical that is associated with depression. It appears that hypericin does not act independently; and as with many herbal remedies, St. John's Wort relies upon the complex interaction of many constituents (known and unknown) for its antidepressant actions. After taking St John's Wort, individuals suffering from depression received: relief, increased appetite, greater interest in life, improved self-esteem, and restoration of normal sleeping patterns.

Another important clinical finding is that St. John's Wort extract for depression has maintained very favourable comparisons to standard prescription/chemical anti-depressive drugs.

Uses of St John's Wort

- depression
- anxiety
- bi-polar disorder
- inflammation of the skin
- blunt injuries
- wounds and burns
- recurrent ear infection
- vitiligo (skin disorder marked by absence of pigment)
- being tested for AIDS
- also can be uses as:
 - antispasmodic
 - astringent
 - expectorant
 - nervine (quieting nervous excitement)
 - vulnerary (healing or treating of wounds)
 - anti-inflammatory
 - anti-microbial.

Commercially Available Forms

St. John's Wort is available in capsule form, tincture, decoction, oil, and as an infusion or as a tea.

Dosage

The best preparation to use appears to be the St. John's Wort extract standardized to contain 0.3% hypericin. The recommended dosage of this extract as an antidepressant is 300 mg three times per day. Each dose should be taken with meals.

However, other practitioners suggest, taking 500 mg per day of herbal extract, tablets, or capsules of St. John's Wort standardized to contain 0.2% hypericin.

Higher intakes of St. John's Wort extract, such as 900 mg per day, may be used in some instances. St. John's Wort should be taken close to meals.

Infusion

Pour a cup of boiling water onto 1-2 teaspoonfuls of the dried herb and leave to infuse for 10 to 15 minutes; and the infusion can be drunk three x daily

Tincture

Take 1 to 4 ml of the tincture, three x daily.

Tea

The Tea should be prepared with 1 to 2 cups of flowers per 1 cup of boiling water; and the tea can be drunk three x daily.

Assessment

The effectiveness of the herb should be assessed after 6 to 8 weeks of starting the treatment.

HIV

In the past, experiments were carried out in which lab mice were infected with viruses similar to HIV, and they were given St. John's Wort extract. The startling result was that the virus' progress was halted. This led to testing on human HIV and AIDS sufferers. The results are yet inconclusive, though anecdotal information suggests "a significant improvement" in some individuals.

Contra Indications

St. John's Wort makes the skin more light sensitive; consequently, individuals with fair skins should avoid exposure to strong sunlight and other sources of ultraviolet light (e.g. tanning beds). These individuals may suffer dermatitis, severe burning, and possibly skin blistering. The severity of the effects will depend upon the amount of the herb taken, and the length of exposure to the light source (sunlight, etc). Some practitioners suggest that all individuals should avoid sunlight when using hypericin (especially if taking large quantities).

Saint John's Wort has a good safety record over centuries of folk medicine; and in contrast to synthetic/chemical antidepressants, there have been no reports of hypericum-related deaths.

Drug monitoring studies of over 7,000 individuals and 27 double-blind research studies confirm its safety. The extensive use of hypericum by millions of individuals has not resulted in reports of any significant side effects.

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