



## Menstrual-Reg

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Modern medicine has found female reproductive disorders difficult to treat conservatively. With more than 100 associated symptoms, premenstrual syndrome (PMS) alone poses significant health issues for many women. Unfortunately, the primary course of treatment for many women's health concerns is synthetic hormone therapy, which artificially forces its effects upon a woman's body. Worse still is the recent emergence of data indicating a link between such hormone therapy and an increase in the risk of cancer.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast, herbal treatments for female reproductive problems provide a more gentle "nudge" towards self-correction, allowing the body's complex hormonal interactions to regain their normal rhythm and function. In addition, hard scientific data is beginning to emerge to confirm the use of many herbal treatments that have long been recommended based solely on consistent case evidence from women from all parts of the world.<sup>2</sup>

**Menstrual-Reg** is an herbal formula designed to facilitate self-correction of a woman's menstrual functions. The herbs contained in Menstrual-Reg have a long history of use for gently and effectively relieving menstrual irregularities and easing or eliminating premenstrual and premenopausal symptoms. Menstrual-Reg contains herbs that are particularly effective for reducing excessive menstrual bleeding and cramping.

**Yarrow** has been used for disorders of the urinary and female reproductive systems. Yarrow aids menstrual regulation by acting as both an emmenagogue to promote and normalize menstrual flow, and as a styptic to reduce excessive menstrual bleeding. Yarrow acts as a uterine spasmolytic—a substance that relaxes uterine muscle spasms—and can be used short-term to help relieve dysmenorrhea (painful menstruation). Taken long-term, yarrow will check excessive bleeding occurring with a normal menstrual cycle, a condition known as menorrhagia. Yarrow contains the volatile oil thujone, which is believed to be the substance responsible for the herb's efficacy in treating menstrual problems. Yarrow contains other substances that provide the herb with analgesic (relieves pain), anti-edemic (prevents/reduces edema or fluid retention), and anti-inflammatory effects. Yarrow should be avoided by pregnant or breast-feeding women—with increased dosages, yarrow can act as a uterine stimulant. Yarrow may also increase the effects of anticoagulants, antihypertensives, and CNS depressants.<sup>2-6</sup>

**Lady's Mantle** has long been used by women to reduce menstrual bleeding, alleviate menstrual cramps, and regulate the menstrual cycle, although controlled human trials have yet to be conducted. Lady's mantle is believed to assist the body in adapting to changing hormonal levels associated with the onset of menopause by reducing the effects of oestrogen withdrawal. Lady's mantle contains tannins, which provide astringent properties that may explain the herb's ability to check hemorrhages. Lady's mantle is contraindicated during pregnancy, as it may stimulate uterine muscles, and should be avoided during breast-feeding, as the effects are unknown.<sup>2,3,5</sup>

**Shepherd's Purse** is approved by the German Commission E for treating PMS, and is also used for mild menstrual irregularities such as menorrhagia and metrorrhagia (uterine bleeding not associated with menstruation). Shepherd's purse is claimed to have antihemorrhagic properties, which may be explained by the presence of hemostats (agents that stop bleeding) such as rutin (a flavonoid) and bursic and tannic acids, as well as vitamin K, which is a coagulant (a substance that helps blood to clot). Shepherd's purse also contains vitamin C, which strengthens blood vessel walls. In addition, shepherd's purse may influence hormone levels due to the presence of the phytosterol beta-sitosterol, which exerts both estrogenic and anti-estrogenic activity. Furthermore, animal research has shown that an extract of shepherd's purse increased uterine tone, while several animal studies have confirmed hypotensive (blood pressure-lowering) effects. Shepherd's purse may enhance the effects of antihypertensives (substances that reduce high blood pressure), as well as enhance the effects of beta blockers, calcium channel blockers and digoxin on the myocardium (heart muscle); thus, concurrent use should be avoided. Shepherd's purse is also not recommended for pregnant or breast-feeding women, as the effects are unknown. Patients taking heart rate-modifying drugs or CNS depressants, and those with heart or lung disease should use shepherd's purse with caution.<sup>2,3,5-7</sup>

**Black Haw** has been used most commonly as a uterine relaxant and general antispasmodic (an agent that relieves or prevents muscle spasms) for treating dysmenorrhea and uterine pain, and for preventing spontaneous abortion. Black haw's uterine relaxant properties have been confirmed in animal studies—in one investigation, black haw extract caused complete relaxation of uterine tissue in rats. Black haw contains scopoletin and other coumarins that are thought to greatly contribute to the herb's antispasmodic effects. These and other substances in black haw may also account for the herb's analgesic, antiedemic, anti-inflammatory and uterorelaxant (relaxes the uterus) properties. Black haw may enhance the effects of anticoagulants. In addition, black haw is contraindicated in pregnant and breast-feeding women.<sup>2,3,5,6</sup>

**Stinging Nettle** acts primarily as a diuretic by increasing urine volume and decreasing systolic blood pressure. Stinging nettle's diuretic properties have prompted its use for hypertension (high blood pressure) and urinary and kidney disorders. The German Commission E recognizes stinging nettle for the treatment of urinary tract inflammation and prevention and treatment of kidney gravel (stones). In addition, stinging nettle's styptic (ability to stop bleeding) action has made it useful for treating nosebleeds and uterine bleeding. Stinging nettle is also reported to be antispasmodic. While the presence of scopoletin contributes to stinging nettle's anti-inflammatory activity, other substances such as caffeic acid, provide antiedemic and antispasmodic effects. Furthermore, according to herbalist Brigitte Mars, from the Rocky Mountain Center for Botanical Studies, stinging nettle is very beneficial for women because it builds the blood and helps cleanse the kidneys and liver. Liver health is especially important for a healthy reproductive system, since the liver breaks down excess hormones. Mars also recommends stinging nettle for women with anemia and irregular menses. Since stinging nettle may potentiate the effects of diuretics, concurrent use should be avoided. Stinging nettle has also been shown to enhance the anti-inflammatory effect of diclofenac. Stinging nettle is contraindicated in pregnant or breast-feeding women, because of its diuretic and uterine stimulant properties. Furthermore, stinging nettle should not be used if there is fluid retention resulting from reduced cardiac (heart) or renal (kidney) function.<sup>3,5,6,8</sup>

**Sarsaparilla** is recognized by the German Commission E for the treatment of rheumatic complaints and kidney ailments. Sarsaparilla contains steroidal saponins that are responsible for its strong diuretic effect in high doses. Sarsaparilla also contains important phytosterols that have been shown to mimic or help regulate the activity of hormones or hormone precursors. For example, sarsaparilla contains stigmasterol, which has demonstrated estrogenic effects and anti-inflammatory activity. In addition, in vitro studies have shown phytosterols to inhibit breast cancer cell growth by up to 80%. Furthermore, phytosterols can help lower cholesterol levels, as they interfere with the absorption of cholesterol in the small intestine. Since sarsaparilla may alter absorption, prescription medications should be taken 2 hours before or after taking sarsaparilla.<sup>3,5,6,9,10</sup>

**False Unicorn** is regarded as an ovarian and uterine tonic and natural treatment for a variety of menstrual disorders—it is said to strengthen and tone the uterus and the entire reproductive system. False unicorn is best-known for correcting menstrual problems such as amenorrhea (absent or suppressed menstruation), dysmenorrhea, menorrhagia, PMS and menopausal symptoms, and for its ability to correct infertility and help prevent miscarriage. In addition, false unicorn may be beneficial in the treatment of early stages of cervical dysplasia (precancerous changes to the lining of the cervix), as well as pelvic inflammatory disease (infection of the uterus, fallopian tubes and adjacent pelvic structures, also known as chronic salpingitis). Women with endometriosis or uterine myoma (fibroids) should not use false unicorn, due to the herb's oestrogen-promoting effects. False unicorn is also not recommended during pregnancy, due to the herb's oxytocic (promoting contractions) effects.<sup>2,3,5,11-18</sup>

**Chaste Tree** is considered a cornerstone of natural PMS treatment and is approved for use by the German Commission E for treating PMS and menopausal complaints. Herbalist Brigitte Mars explains that chaste tree affects the pituitary gland and can help normalize an irregular or nonexistent period. Mars indicates that chaste tree is also beneficial for women who have been on birth control pills who have yet to re-establish a normal cycle. Over the years, a considerable body of research has been documented on the use of chaste tree for treating menstrual problems, including menstrual cycle regulation and uterine bleeding. One double-blind study and several open and postmarketing surveillance studies have shown that PMS or individual symptoms can be influenced positively with chaste tree. For example, a prospective, randomized, placebo-controlled study published in the *British Medical Journal* found chaste tree to be a well-tolerated and effective treatment for PMS, with the effects being confirmed by physicians and patients alike—over half the women experienced a 50% or greater improvement in their symptoms with few and mild side-effects. Furthermore, women with premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD)—a severe form of PMS that interferes with work, social activities and relationships—responded well to treatment with both fluoxetine (a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI)) and an extract of chaste tree. While fluoxetine was more effective for psychological symptoms, the chaste tree extract more effectively diminished the physical symptoms. Chaste tree should be avoided by pregnant or breast-feeding women, as the effects are unknown.<sup>1,3,5,8,19-22</sup>

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