



St. John's Wort (Concentrate with Passion Flower)

Stock #655-3 (100 capsules)
Stock #656-7 (60 capsules)

St. John's wort is among the most widely studied herbal medicines today. Although it boasts a long history of folk use for a variety of illnesses, the most thoroughly researched use is for the treatment of depression. For example, in 1996, the prestigious *British Medical Journal* published results of a systematic review of 23 randomized, controlled trials using St. John's wort, involving over 1,750 outpatients with mild to moderately-severe depressive disorders. The review confirmed that St. John's wort is equally effective as standard antidepressant drugs, while having far fewer side effects.^{1,2}

It is important to note that although research has proven the clinical effectiveness of St. John's wort as equal to conventional antidepressants, there is a significant advantage to using the herb simply due to its lack of side effects. A large-scale study, involving 3,250 patients ranging in age from 20 to 90 years, showed that only 2.4% experienced any side effects, namely gastrointestinal irritation, allergic reaction, tiredness and restlessness. The frequency and severity of these side effects were regarded as clinically insignificant, particularly in comparison to the numerous adverse effects associated with tricyclics and other antidepressants such as anxiety, loss of appetite, constipation, diarrhea, dizziness, drowsiness, dry mouth, headache, insomnia, male sexual dysfunction, nausea, nervousness, stomach discomfort, increased sweating, tremor and weakness, to name a few. Furthermore, the *British Medical Journal* reports that an overall average of 30.1 deaths occurred (during 1987-92) per million prescriptions written for antidepressants (34.14 deaths for tricyclic drugs alone). In stark contrast, there have been no reported deaths from St. John's wort use. In fact, according to an article published in the *American Journal of Natural Medicine*, German doctors prescribed 66 million daily doses of St. John's wort extract in 1994, and today, prescribe St. John's wort 20 times more often than Prozac.^{2,5}

Extensive research has been conducted in an effort to ascertain how St. John's wort works. Originally, the herb was believed to function as an antidepressant by means of hypericin's (an active constituent in the herb) inhibition of monoamine oxidase (MAO), resulting in an increase of serotonin and other neurotransmitters. However, more recent research has proven otherwise. Current theory now suggests that St. John's wort prevents the re-uptake of serotonin in much the same way as prescription antidepressants like fluoxetine (Prozac), paroxetine (Paxil), and sertraline (Zoloft). This school of thought has been supported by German research, which confirmed a 50% inhibition of serotonin uptake by postsynaptic receptors using a standardized St. John's wort extract. However, the mode of action to explain St. John's wort's clinical effectiveness still remains unclear.^{2,6}

Additional research suggests that St. John's wort may also benefit those suffering from insomnia and fibromyalgia. Unlike standard antidepressants (particularly tricyclics and MAO inhibitors), which often interfere with and reduce sleep quality, St. John's wort has been shown to enhance deep sleep and improve sleep quality without acting as a sedative (i.e. studies show no change in the onset of sleep or total sleep duration). Also, since there is a correlation between the pain of fibromyalgia and sleep quality, St. John's wort may be helpful in reducing pain and associated fatigue by helping sufferers achieve a deeper, more restful sleep. Furthermore, since the primary cause of pain of fibromyalgia is related to low levels of serotonin (chronic low serotonin levels seem to greatly increase the sensation of pain), St. John's wort's ability to enhance serotonin levels by inhibiting serotonin re-uptake may prove beneficial.^{2,7,8}

Each capsule of St. John's Wort Concentrate provides 300mg of St. John's wort extract, standardized to contain 0.3% hypericin. Each capsule also provides the additional health benefits of passion flower (100mg per capsule).

Passion flower has been used for centuries as a natural sedative for insomnia and nervousness. In 1920, researchers documented the herb's effect on inducing normal sleep with light breathing and little to no mental depression and no confusion upon waking. More recent research confirms the anxiolytic and central nervous system (CNS) sedative properties of passion flower, although the specific constituents responsible for these actions remain unclear. Today, passion flower is approved for use in Europe for relaxation, nervousness and insomnia. In addition, passion flower has demonstrated some benzodiazepine receptor agonist activity and thus, may be helpful in the treatment of benzodiazepine withdrawal symptoms.⁹⁻¹²

Excessive doses of passion flower may potentiate MAOI therapy. In addition, passion flower should be avoided during pregnancy and nursing, as animal studies show that isolated constituents produce uterine-stimulant activity. Furthermore, since passion flower has not been evaluated for use in young children, it is not recommended for children under two.^{9,10,13}

References:

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