

# Chaste Tree

*Vitex agnus-castus* L.

[Fam. *Verbenaceae*]

## OVERVIEW

Chaste tree, also called chaste berry or vitex, derives its common name from the traditional belief that the plant promoted chastity. The fruit was used by both men and women in ancient Greece and Rome, and by monks during the Middle Ages, to suppress sexual desire. In Germany, chaste tree is a common treatment for gynecological disorders and it has recently become popular in the U.S.

## USES

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS); painful menstruation; hyperprolactinemia and corpus luteum insufficiency.

NOTE: The German Commission E recommended that women who experience tension or swelling of the breasts or menstrual disturbances should consult a healthcare provider for proper diagnosis.

## OTHER POTENTIAL USES

Breast pain.

## DOSAGE

DRY NATIVE EXTRACT: One 2.6–4.2 mg tablet, standardized to contain approximately 0.6–1.0% casticin, swallowed with some liquid each morning.

FLUID EXTRACT: 0.5–4.0 ml, daily.

TINCTURE: 40 drops, daily.

## CONTRAINDICATIONS

No known contraindications.

PREGNANCY AND LACTATION: Not for use during pregnancy. No restrictions known during breast-feeding. There is insufficient information on chaste tree's effect on breast-feeding. Long-term use of chaste tree (more than 2 weeks) may lead to disruption of the cessation of the menstrual cycle that normally accompanies breast-feeding and an early return to fertility which may or may not be desired. Consult a healthcare provider prior to use while breast-feeding.

## Comments

When using a dietary supplement, purchase it from a reliable source. For best results, use the same brand of product throughout the period of use. As with all medications and dietary supplements, please inform your healthcare provider of all herbs and medications you are taking. Interactions may occur between medications and herbs or even among different herbs when taken at the same time. Treat your herbal supplement with care by taking it as directed, storing it as advised on the label, and keeping it out of the reach of children and pets. Consult your healthcare provider with any questions.



## ADVERSE EFFECTS

Itching, rash, headache, hair loss, fatigue, agitation, dry mouth, rapid heartbeat (tachycardia), nausea, and increased menstrual flow may occur rarely (noted in 1–2% of patients in clinical studies).

## DRUG INTERACTIONS

Consult with a healthcare provider if using dopamine-receptor antagonists such as haloperidol, and dopamine-receptor blocking agents such as metoclopramide. Chaste tree may also interfere with the effectiveness of oral contraceptives and hormone-replacement therapy; however, this potential interaction is theoretical and has not been documented in case reports.



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