

St. John's wort

Hypericum perforatum

[Fam. Clusiaceae]

OVERVIEW

St. John's wort (SJW) rose from virtual obscurity in the U.S. to become the fifth best-selling dietary supplement in mainstream retail stores. Its rise to fame came after the national media reported clinical research showing that SJW is safe and effective for treating mild to moderate depression. The Greek physician Hippocrates (ca. 460-377 B.C.E.) was one of the first to speak of the health benefits of SJW. Preparations include teas, alcoholic tinctures, and tablets using either the plant in its crude form or standardized preparation. SJW is typically standardized to contain a consistent level of hypericin (0.3%), or hyperforin (3-5%), two naturally occurring chemicals found in the plant.

USES

Internal

Depression (mild to moderate).

External

Wound healing; first-degree burns; muscle pain (myalgia).

OTHER POTENTIAL

USES

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD: mental depression related to certain seasons, especially winter); obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD); menopause; fatigue; pediatric nocturnal incontinence; premenstrual syndrome (PMS).

DOSAGE

FLUID EXTRACT: 1:1 (*g/ml*), 2 ml, twice daily.

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.

DRY EXTRACT: 5-7:1, 300 mg, 3 times daily.

EXTRACT (STANDARDIZED): standardized to 0.3% hypericin or 2-4.5% hyperforin; 900 mg daily in 3 divided doses.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

No known contraindications.

PREGNANCY AND LACTATION: No known restrictions.

ADVERSE EFFECTS

Photosensitization (redness of the skin caused by exposure to sunlight or other ultraviolet radiation), especially in fair-skinned individuals, may occur with excessive dosages (1,800 mg/day), but this reaction is relatively rare.

DRUG INTERACTIONS

SJW should not be taken in combination with any pharmaceutical antidepressants unless under professional guidance. SJW may interact with oral contraceptives, anticoagulant drugs like warfarin, the asthma drug theophylline, the anti-HIV drug Indinavir, the immunosuppressant drug cyclosporine, and the cardiac medication digoxin. Abruptly stopping SJW after prolonged use may increase the concentration of drugs like carbamazepine

(Tegretol®). Patients with depression should avoid alcohol. Because SJW has been shown to potentially act with these and possibly other drugs, consumers and patients are advised to consult with a properly qualified healthcare professional before using SJW with any other over-the-counter or prescription medications.



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