



HEALTH FOR LIFE

Common Herbal Remedies for Women's Health

Recently there has been an increase in the use of alternative herbal remedies in women's health. Herbs have been used to treat such conditions as depression, PMS, and symptoms of menopause. The herbal industry is not regulated and not much research has been done on the long-term effects of herbal use and the possible interaction of herbal products with other prescription drugs. The lack of regulation allows the industry to claim benefits without the support of scientific study.

While many people think that herbal remedies are natural and not harmful, each of these preparations can have toxic levels and side effects. It is very important to speak with your doctor before using any herbal product, especially if you are pregnant or breast-feeding.

Since natural products are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration the same way prescribed drugs are, we urge you to be cautious. If you do choose to take any of these herbs, choose reputable companies to buy these products from and carefully follow the directions on the label.

Below is a table of some common herbal remedies that are used in women's health.

Name	Alternative Name	Conditions	Comments
Bearberry (Uva-ursi)	Upland Cranberry Rockberry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used for urinary tract infections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May cause nausea and vomiting Urinary acidifiers (cranberry juice, orange juice) will inactivate the benefits of the herb Use only for a few days
Black Cohosh (Cimicifuga racemosa)	Baneberry Black Snakeroot Bugbane Bugwort Cimicifuga Rattle Root Rattleweed Squawroot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hot flashes and premenstrual discomfort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May cause gastrointestinal (GI) disturbance and low blood pressure Do not take if pregnant or breast-feeding Do not take long-term (more than 6 months)

Name	Alternative Name	Conditions	Comments
Echinacea (Echinacea angustifolia)	American Cone Flower Black susans Black Sampson Hedgehog Indian Head Kansas Snakeroot Purple Cone Flower Racine d'echinacea Red Sunflower Scurvy Root	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proven effective for treatment of cold and flu symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immunosuppression Do not use if you take medicines that suppress your immune system
Garlic (Allium sativum)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shown to be effective in reducing cholesterol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May interact with anticoagulants and/or interfere with blood sugar levels
St. John's Wort (Hypericum perforatum)	Amber Amber Touch-and-Heal, Goatweed, Hardhay Hyperici Herba Hypericum Johns Wort Klamath Weed Millepertuis Rosin Rose Saint Johns Wort SJW Tipton Weed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mild to moderate depression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May have sedative and anti-inflammatory activity as well Do not take with Prozac or other antidepressants
Tee Tree Oil (Melaleuca alternifolia)	Cajeput Oil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acne 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rarely causes skin irritation or allergic reactions Do not take internally

Sources:

- American Pharmaceutical Association: *Practical Guide to Natural Medicine*. Stonesong Press, 1999.
- Covinton, TR. *The Handbook of Non-Prescription Drugs*. Washington, DC: AphA, 1996.
- Herbal Medicine*. Pharmacist's Letter

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