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## **Effective Remedies for Menopausal Symptoms**

There are many effective remedies for menopausal symptoms. Of all “cures” the most effective are from the family of healers in the plant world called herbs. Herbs I take and put my clients on for menopause that have completely eradicated all menopausal symptoms include; St John’s Wort, Black Cohosh, Shatavari and Wild Yam.

### **First and Foremost: know what you are taking**

Many commercially available herbal extracts may be species other than those clinically trialed and proven to be effective in treating symptoms. Those extracts may share a similar name (such as many “wild yam” products) but may not contain a full spectrum of phytochemicals expected from a good quality herbal extract, or provide the therapeutic activity required.

At NatMed we only use double blind placebo trialed, pharmaceutical grade herbal remedies that have been tested using thin layer chromatography, high performance liquid chromatography and mass spectrometry. These tests are essential in identifying genus and species correlate with that proven to be efficacious in treating patient symptoms.

The following contains excerpts from:

“A Phytotherapists Perspective”, issue 51; May 2011

by Professor Kerry Bone; founder of Mediherb: Australia’s foremost supplier of pharmaceutical grade herbal medicines.

### **St John’s Wort**

This herb is named after John the Babtist and is extremely useful for the anxiety associated with menopause. The aerial parts of *Hypericum perforatum* have traditionally been used as a nervine tonic, particularly in the treatment of menopausal neurosis, excitability and nervous conditions with depression.<sup>5,6</sup>

Four clinical studies have investigated the use of St John's Wort and Black Cohosh combined. Placebo-controlled trials found the combination to be effective in reducing menopausal symptoms, including the psychological component.<sup>36-38</sup> An observational study found the combination was superior to Black Cohosh alone in alleviating menopausal mood symptoms.<sup>39</sup> The findings of this trial showed that women had significant reduction in duration of hot flushes, decreased frequency and an improved quality of life due to fewer sleep problems.<sup>32,33</sup>

### **Black Cohosh**

*Cimicifuga racemosa* (*Actaea racemosa*) root and rhizome has been used traditionally to treat female reproductive disorders such as painful periods and ovarian pain.



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## **Clinical Studies**

Black Cohosh preparations have been extensively used and clinically investigated. A review published in 2008 found 10 randomised controlled trials for the use of Black Cohosh to relieve menopausal problems. Of randomised controlled trials conducted, two have found that Black Cohosh significantly improved menopausal symptoms in healthy women.<sup>13,14</sup> In an observational study, Black Cohosh improved quality of life in postmenopausal women with elevated body weight.<sup>18</sup>

## **Safety**

Although some cases of suspected liver damage have been reported for Black Cohosh, rigorous diagnostic assessment in 2009 of this data found no evidence for a causal relationship between treatment with Black Cohosh and liver disease.<sup>28,29</sup> Even an earlier, less rigorous analysis found no cases of probable or certain causality.<sup>30</sup> A meta-analysis of 5 randomised, controlled trials did not detect any significant difference between those treated with Black Cohosh and controls regarding abnormality of liver function.

## **Wild Yam**

Wild Yam (*Dioscorea villosa*), is popularly, yet incorrectly, accredited with providing progestogenic activity, however new research done by MediHerb and the University of Queensland, has found that Wild Yam is in fact oestrogenic. Very low levels of progesterone were found in saliva of women taking Wild Yam products, and Wild Yam appeared to suppress progesterone synthesis.<sup>3</sup>

Wild yam contains several “steroidal saponins”. Steroidal saponins may exert oestrogenic effects by binding with oestrogen receptors of the hypothalamus (part of the negative feedback mechanism of oestrogen control). Hence, in the low oestrogen environment of peri- and postmenopause, Wild Yam may alleviate symptoms of oestrogen withdrawal.

The selective binding may reduce the hypothalamus-mediated symptoms such as hot flushes, vaginal dryness and aggression associated with unopposed testosterone by convincing the body that more oestrogen is present in the bloodstream than actually is.

Wild Yam is antispasmodic so it will also reduce pain associated with heavy periods or endometriosis. Commercially available 'wild yam' extracts may be species other than *Dioscorea villosa*, and have not been clinically trialed and proven to be effective in treating the symptoms of menopause. These extracts may be the Chinese yam, *Dioscorea opposita*, and may not contain the full spectrum of phytochemicals expected from a good quality herbal extract, or provide the therapeutic activity of Wild Yam (*Dioscorea villosa*).



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## Shatavari

Asparagus racemosus root is regarded in Ayurveda as an aphrodisiac and a female reproductive tonic with a rejuvenative action. Shatavari is traditionally said 'to give the capacity to have a hundred husbands': God forbid! In addition to promoting conception it has been used for the treatment of menopause. It is an effective demulcent for dry and inflamed membranes of the lungs, stomach, kidney and sexual organs,<sup>40</sup> hence it may be of benefit for the treatment of vaginal dryness in menopause.

Shatavari is also regarded as a remedy from the rasayana group, meaning it may strengthen or promote the health of all tissues of the body.<sup>41</sup>

For more information contact NatMed or read "[You're Not Crazy, It's Your Hormones!](#)" by Brian Sher, Dr Robert Goldman and Belinda Orgo: 2005: [Smart Publishing PtyLtd](#)

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