

Spotlight On Herbs

Herbal Remedy Provides Natural Relief for Depression Sufferers

(NAPSA)—In any given year, more than 17 million American adults suffer some form of depression. Whether clinical depression, seasonal affective disorder or simply a case of “the blues,” depression can be a debilitating and difficult condition to treat.

Historically, patients suffering from depression have been treated with a prescription antidepressant. But nowadays, self-treatment may be an option. For those who want to self-treat their condition, an all-natural herbal alternative known as St. John’s Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) may be an effective remedy for mild to moderate depression, according to recent research.

Herbalists first discovered the mood-altering effects of St. John’s Wort in the 13th century. The full benefits of the herb were revealed for the first time in 1996 when a study published in the *British Medical Journal* showed St. John’s Wort to be an effective treatment option for patients with mild to moderate depression.

Now, in the 21st century, St. John’s Wort is still the subject of numerous clinical trials and is continuing to raise consumer interest, both in the United States and abroad. In Germany, St. John’s Wort is already used as an herbal medicine for depressive moods, anxiety and nervousness. In fact, German doctors recommend St. John’s Wort for depression more than they do prescription medications. The herb received approval in 1984 from the Commission E, a federally mandated scientific committee consisting of physicians, pharmacists and pharmacologists.

In the United States, a major three-year clinical trial on the antidepressant effects of St. John’s Wort was recently launched with the support of the National Institutes of Health. This study is the first to test the effects of the herb against Zoloft, a popular prescription antidepressant, and may prove useful to consumers put off by the potential side effects of pharmaceutical drugs.



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People with mild depression may experience such symptoms as a persistent sad or empty feeling, and have difficulty maintaining normal activities. Moderate depression affects the way people function at work or in social activities and often causes a loss of energy and appetite. Severe depression markedly interferes with a person’s ability to function normally.

Patients suffering from mild to moderate depression should take the recommended dose of 900 mg of the extract per day. The only side effect attributed to St. John’s Wort is sensitivity to sunlight in fair-skinned people, but this is a very rare occurrence.

Recent reports have shown that St. John’s Wort can lower the effectiveness of prescription drugs used for immunosuppression, HIV treatment, heart disease and may possibly interfere with oral contraceptives and other drugs.

This information has been produced by the American Botanical Council (ABC), a non-profit research and educational organization in Austin, Texas. For more scientific and technical information on St. John’s Wort and other herb information, contact ABC at www.herbalgram.org.