

HERBAL MEDICINES: DO THEY WORK AND ARE THEY SAFE?

Associate Professor John Eden has been researching herbal medicines for over 20 years, and we also have a Chinese medicine practitioner, Bernice Lowe at WHRIA. We can discuss your options of a useful herbal adjunct to Western medicine, or a safe, effective alternative.

We understand that not all herbal medicines are created equal. When selecting an herbal medicine there are three aspects to consider:

1. **Quality control:** Is it well made? Is each dose the same? How were the herbal components extracted? Are there any contaminants present?
2. **Safety:** Could this product hurt me in some way?
3. **Efficacy:** Does this product work better than a placebo or some other comparator?

Over the years, we've experimented with many different herbal medicines and found the following clinically tested products to be effective. Please note you should always discuss with a doctor before starting any new medications:

REMIFEMIN[®] FOR MENOPAUSE

This is the German-herbal therapy for relieving sweats, flushes and mood swings (better than placebo) in a dose of 1 twice a day ([see Remifemin[®] Clinical Study](#)). A "dose-finding study" showed that 2 twice a day was better than 1 twice a day. It helps about 7 out of 10 women within 4-6 weeks. It is not oestrogenic and so is safe for women who should not be exposed to oestrogen (e.g. after breast cancer). It can occasionally cause nausea. Rarely, there have been case-reports of severe liver problems associated with Remifemin[®] usage. It is not clear if the herb is the cause or it is co-incidental.

PREMULAR[®] FOR PRE MENSTRUAL SYNDROME SYMPTOMS

Agnus castus has a long traditional use for women's health problems. Premular[®] is a clinically tested formulation for the relief of PMS symptoms, especially mood swings and breast pain. A placebo controlled trial and a "dose-finding study" have both shown efficacy.

It's generally very safe and will not interact with 'brain drugs' such as antidepressants (unlike St John's Wort). An effective first-therapy for many women suffering from PMS is Premular[®] taken alone, 1 tablet per day, or in combination with vitamin B6 50-100mg daily. You can visit the [Flordis](#) website for more details.

IBEROGAST[®] FOR IRRITABLE BOWEL SYNDROME

IBS is a common complaint and over 20 clinical trials have shown that Iberogast[®] is superior to placebo for symptoms such as bloating, cramping and heartburn. Diet modification and Iberogast[®], 20 drops in water three times per day before or with meals should be trialed for this uncomfortable condition. It is also safe for children. You can visit the [Flordis](#) website for more details.

REMOTIV® FOR MILD STRESS AND ANXIETY

This extract of St John's Wort has been tested in over 2,000 people, including a 12 month study. It is useful for relieving symptoms such as mild stress and anxiety. 1 tablet morning and evening, usually starts to work within 2 weeks of starting treatment and takes about 6 weeks to achieve the full effect. It contains very low levels of hyperforin which is a component in St John's Wort that can interact with some drugs. Nevertheless it is always important to tell your doctor that you are taking St John's Wort extract before starting any new drug therapy. Side effects include mild nausea. You can visit the [Flordis](#) website for more details.

References:

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