



## DIETARY SUPPLEMENT FACT SHEET

<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/dhpw/Wellness.aspx>

### **St. John's Wort (*Hypericum Perforatum*)**

**Historical Perspective:** A yellow-flowering plant named after St. John the Baptist (abundant on his birthday, June 24). Has been used in traditional folk medicine for hundreds of years to treat different disorders, to include anxiety and depression. The active ingredient is hypericin.

**Common Uses:** Used in the tea form as a nerve tonic, a diuretic, and for treatment of conditions such as insomnia and even gastritis. In the pill form, it is used for mild to moderate depression. Used in the oil form (red oil) to relieve inflammation, promote healing, and as a hemorrhoid treatment.

**Common or Recommended Dosages:** 1-2 cups of the tea daily. 1-2 pills daily.

**Potential Side Effects:** Increased sensitivity to the sun (rare, with large doses), possible high blood pressure, gastrointestinal discomfort, fatigue, dizziness, itching, nausea, anxiety, dry mouth, and a skin rash.

**Food-Drug-Supplement Interactions:** Certain foods may react unfavorably with hypericin, including the amino acids tryptophan and tyrosine, beer, coffee, wine, chocolate, fava beans, and salami.

**Contraindications to Use:** St. John's Wort should not be used if pregnant, or on antidepressants, diet pills, narcotics, or amphetamines. Preparations of St. John's Wort are inducers of various drug-metabolizing enzymes, resulting in a lessened therapeutic effect in some medications. It should not be taken with indinavir, warfarin, cyclosporin, oral contraceptives, digoxin, and theophylline. (Committee on Safety of Medicines)

#### **Research Data on Safety and Efficacy:**

- 1) The human clinical trials indicate that St. John's Wort may alleviate mild depression. However, more research is needed.
- 2) There is simply not enough human research available to indicate that St. John's Wort promotes well-being.

**Bottom-Line:** St. John's Wort may be an effective treatment for mild to moderate depression. However, anyone taking prescription or over-the-counter medications should consult with a health care provider, registered dietitian, or pharmacist. Discontinue use if side effects occur.

#### **References:**

1. The Honest Herbal: A Sensible Guide to the Use of Herbs and Related Remedies. V. Tyler, Binghamton, NY. The Haworth Press, Inc. 1993. P. 275-276.

2. St. John's Wort Side Effects and Warnings.

<http://www.personalhealthzone.com/stjohnswort.html> accessed February, 2000.

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#### 4. Commonly Used Medicinal Herbs.

<http://www.ama-assn.org/sci-pubs/journals/most/recent/issues/fami/fsa8005.html>.

5. Important Interactions Between St. John's Wort (*Hypericum Perforatum*) preparations and Prescribed Medicines. Message From Professor A. Breckenridge, Chairman, Committee On Safety Of Medicines. 29 February 2000.

6. The Health Professionals' Guide to Popular Dietary Supplements, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Allison Sarubin Fragakis, MS, RD, The American Dietetic Association. 2003.