ST JOHN'S WORT
(Hypericum perforatum)

Clinical Summary

Actions

- Anti-inflammatory
- Nervine Tonic
- Antiviral
- Astringent
- Hepatic
- Antiproliferative
- Antispasmodic
- Relaxing Nervine
- Nervous System Trophorestorative
- Anxiolytic
- Antidepressant
- Vulnerary
- Alterative
- Anodyne

Indications

- Mild to moderate depression and to reduce the risk of relapse, anxiety, stress, burnout, exhaustion, chronic fatigue syndrome (where there is a viral infection with concomitant depressive symptoms), seasonal affective disorder, premenstrual syndrome, perimenopausal and menopausal women with psychological symptoms, anxiety and depression associated with irritable bowel syndrome
- Nerve pain, nerve entrapment in osteoarthritis, sciatica, fibromyalgia, migraine headaches
- Gastrointestinal conditions such as oesophagitis and peptic ulcers, liver stagnation
- Viruses including herpes viruses such as cold sores and shingles, Graves' disease (caused by virus)
- Topically to treat burns, injuries, allergic dermatitis, psoriasis, muscle pain, bacterial vaginosis

Traditional Use

St John's wort was traditionally used for damaged nerve endings.

Energetics

Neutral (can be warming and cooling), drying. Taste is slightly bitter, pungent, sweet.

Constituents

Naphthodianthrones (including the red pigment hypericin and pseudohypericin). Flavonoids, mostly hyperoside, rutin, quercitrin, isoquercitrin, quercetin and kaempferol, phenolics, including hyperforin, procyanidins, essential oil, sterols (beta-sitosterol), vitamins C and A, xanthones and choline.

Use in Pregnancy

In practice St. John's wort is not recommended in pregnancy.

Contraindications and Cautions

Some people, particularly fair skinned people, find that taking St. John's wort (especially hypericin standardised extracts) causes photosensitivity although this is unlikely at therapeutic doses.

Drug Interactions

St. John's wort is infamous for its known effects on pharmaceutical drugs. It increases the metabolic pathways used by many prescribed drugs thus reducing blood levels of these drugs which may lead to loss of therapeutic effect and potentially render them ineffective. Please see the full monograph for a detailed list.

Administration and Dosage

Liquid extract 1:1 in 60% alcohol
15 to 80mL weekly