

St. John's Wort

Latin name: *Hypericum perforatum*

Family: Clusiaceae (synonymous with Hyperaceae)

Miscellaneous:

- a.k.a. Fairy Herb
- Native to Europe & Asia.
- The leaves and flowering tops are used for therapeutic effects.
- In Germany, hi-strength preparations of St. John's wort are the leading treatment for depression.¹ It has been reported that some German physicians prescribe it up to 20 times more often than Prozac.
- Recent studies indicated antiviral properties in mice infected experimentally with two murine leukemia retroviruses. Hypericin shows activity against a broad array of viruses.¹

Uses:

Antidepressant, antiviral.

Mechanism:

MOA is not clear. However, St. John's wort causes an increase in serotonin 5-HT_{1A} and 5-HT_{2A} receptors and a down regulation of β -adrenergic receptors (similar to migraine in an identical study).¹ The most thoroughly researched active ingredient in this herb is a naphthodianthrone called hypericin.

Dosage:

2-4 g/day containing 0.6-1.2 mg total hypericin

*Supplements should be standardized to \approx 0.3% hypericin

*It should be advised that it may take 6-8 weeks before effects are noticed

Contraindications/Side effects:

MAO-inhibitors (potentiate), pregnancy/breastfeeding, photosensitivity/phototoxicity.

Citation References:

1. Tyler, V., Robbers, J.: *Tyler's Herbs of Choice: The Therapeutic Use of Phytomedicinals*: 1999, pp. 166-170.

General References:

1. Tyler, V., Robbers, J.: *Tyler's Herbs of Choice: The Therapeutic Use of Phytomedicinals*: 1999, pp. 166-170.
2. Pierce, A., The American Pharmaceutical Association: *Practical Guide to Natural Medicines*: 1999, pp. 566-569.
3. Karch, S.: *The Consumer's Guide to Herbal Medicine*: 1999, pp. 162-164.
4. Facts And Comparisons: *Guide To Popular Natural Products*: 1999, pp. 197-199.
5. McGuffin, M., Hobbs, C., Upton, R., Goldberg, A.: *American Herbal Products Association's Botanical Safety Handbook*: 1997, pp. 62-63.
6. Duke, J.: *Dr. Duke's Essential Herbs*: 1999, pp. 199-215.