

St. John's Wort

**Look before
you leap!**



**TEXAS AIDS HEALTH
FRAUD INFORMATION
NETWORK**

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Also known as:

Hypericum perforatum, klamath weed, amber touch-and-heal, goatweed, rosin rose, millepertuis, Qian Ceng Lou, demon chaser, hard hay, hyperici herba, and tipton weed.

What is it?

A flowering weed grown in Europe and Asia, but now found in the United States and Canada.

History of use:

St. John's Wort has been used in folk medicine since the Middle Ages. It was used by mouth to reduce inflammation, to ease stomach pain, to help sleeplessness, as a diuretic, to ease nerve pain, for headaches, and to treat anxiety. It was applied to the skin to treat bruises, muscle pain, mild burns, smooth white spots on the skin, and for hemorrhoids. Recently, St. John's Wort has been used to treat mild depression.

Safety and Effectiveness:

St. John's Wort has been shown to be helpful in the treatment of mild depression in some people. There are questions in the scientific community about its use in severe depression. St. John's Wort is thought to be safe, unless taking other medications. St. John's Wort has been tested as an antiretroviral agent for the treatment of HIV in adults, but there isn't enough evidence to show whether or not it works. **ALWAYS TELL YOUR DOCTOR OR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL THAT YOU ARE TAKING ST. JOHN'S WORT.**

Adverse Reactions

Being sensitive to the sun and skin rash can occur with large doses (>1800mg). Sleeplessness, vivid dreams, anxiety, irritability, GI discomfort, tiredness, dry mouth, dizziness, and headache have all been reported as side effects. St. John's Wort should not be taken by pregnant women because it can make the uterus cramp. Women who breast-feed their babies should also not take St. John's Wort because it may make the babies sleepy and colicky.

St. John's Wort can react with other drugs and change how they work in the body. The following list of drugs will be affected by St. John's Wort. If you take one of the drugs listed below or a drug that is the same type of drug as those listed, talk to your health care professional **before** taking St. John's Wort.

Other drugs affected by St. John's Wort

- amitriptyline (Elavil)
- Antidepressants (Serzone, Paxil, Zoloft)
- anesthetics
- asolanzapine
- barbiturates
- Birth control pills
- Calcium channel blockers (Cardizem, Calan)
- Chemotherapy drugs (etoposide, vincristine, paclitaxel)
- clozapine (Clozaril)
- cyclosporine (Neoral, Sandimmune)
- digoxin (Lanoxin)
- fexofenadine (Allegra)
- glucocorticoids
- iron
- lansoprazole (Prevacid)
- losartan (Cozaar)
- MAO inhibitors
- Narcotics (Vicodin, Tylenol w/ codeine)
- Nonnucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitors (Viramune, Rescriptor, Sustiva)
- nortriptyline (Pamelor)
- omeprazole (Prilosec)
- piroxicam (Feldene)
- Protease inhibitors (Crixivan, Agenerase, Viracept, Norvir, Fortovase, Invirase)
- Quinolones (Cipro)
- reserpine
- Selective Serotonin Re-uptake Inhibitors (Paxil, Zoloft, Prozac)
- Serotonin antagonists ("the triptans") (Imitrex, Zomig, Miguard, Amerge, Maxalt)
- Sulfa drugs (Bactrim, Septra)
- tetracycline
- theophylline
- tramadol (Ultram)
- warfarin (Coumadin)