



Herbal Medicine for Women's Health



CHASTE TREE



Vitex agnus-castus

Been in use since ancient times for various women's health issues. In Ancient Rome, 'vestal virgins' wore the leaves as a symbol of chastity. Monks wore it on their belt to promote chastity.

Herbal Actions

Helps to regulate menstrual cycles, most likely because it works on the HPO axis balancing prolactin levels, enhances corpus luteum development and by that end boosts progesterone.

May aid fertility when luteal phase issues or progesterone issues

Useful for PMS, especially when there is breast tenderness, acne, migraines and mood swings

Galactagogue – May help to promote breast milk when used in low doses

Supports pituitary health and hormone regulation – can regulate prolactin levels

May help to smooth the passage of perimenopause



CHASTE TREE

Vitex agnus-castus

Energetics

Slightly warming and drying



Cautions

Best not used when our bodies are establishing hormone balance e.g. in teen years; not always indicated in PCOS;

I advise waiting 3 months after cessation of OCP

The first month or two may cause some unusual periods while sorting things out

Some people may experience some mood shifts initially – combine with nervous system herbs if so.

Dose example

20 drop liquid extract each morning. Stop during menstruation.



DONG QUAI



Angelica sinensis

Has been referred to as 'women's ginseng'. It's strengthening, cleansing, relaxing, protective. A blood tonic, it brings energy back to the system but it's main focus is on the reproductive system.

Herbal Actions

Uterine tonic

Blood tonic

Brain tonic

Liver support

Immune and Inflammation balancer

Circulatory stimulant

Analgesic and anti-spasmodic



DONG QUAI

Angelica sinensis



Energetics

Warming, moistening, nourishing

Cautions

Don't used with warfarin, or if you have a history of spontaneous miscarriage as it has anticoagulant effects. This is not always a bad thing, and part of why it's so good for clotty periods. Best when taken on days not menstruation – for those with a heavy bleed avoid taking it during your period.

Generally not recommended in pregnancy due to lack of data, however when combined with certain herbs it may be helpful – always seek practitioners advice if pregnant. Strong historical TCM use in miscarriage prevention.

Avoid in overly hot constitutions without balancing herbs

Dose example

1-3mL three times daily of fluid extract



MOTHERWORT



Leonurus cardiaca

A nurturing herb that helps to establish the rhythm of the heart and of the menstrual cycle.

Often used for palpitations related to anxiety or hyperthyroidism.

Herbal Actions

Bitter
Relaxing nervine
Antispasmodic
Emmenagogue
Cardiotonic
Anti-arrythmic



MOTHERWORT

Leonurus cardiaca



Energetics

Cooling, relaxing, drying

Cautions

Potential caution in those with hypothyroidism

Do not use in early stages of pregnancy or if trying to conceive

Monitor blood pressure in those who are taking BP medications due to possible additive effect

Dose example

600mg twice daily or 1.2 mL two times daily of fluid extract



WITHANIA



Withania somnifera

Often referred to by its alternate name, Ashwaganda.
A calming adaptogen, thought to provide strength and energy.
Supports many body systems including the immune system,
hormonal balance of the thyroid, adrenals and blood sugars.
Suited to those who are wired and tired.

Herbal Actions

- Adaptogenic
- Anxiolytic
- Antioxidant
- Immunomodulant
- Anticancer
- Chemoprotective
- Hypotensive
- Anti-inflammatory
- Anti-arrhythmic



WITHANIA

Withania somnifera

Energetics

Hot, dry

Cautions

Conflicting information about pregnancy safety

May cause GIT irritation

Caution alongside immunosuppressant medications

Contraindicated in hyperthyroidism

Dose example

1 tsp powder mixed with warm milk or ghee

250–600mg powdered extract daily

40–90ml of 1:2 extract per week



LADY'S MANTLE



Alchemilla vulgaris

Has an affinity to the female reproductive system, urinary tract and digestive tract. It suits those who are highly sensitive, and experience emotions links to issues with their reproductive system. Nourishing and supporting to those who have experienced trauma relating to reproductive concerns. Suited for heavy bleeding of all forms.

Herbal Actions

Anti-inflammatory

Antidiarrhoea

Antihaemorrhagic (uterine)

Antilithic

Antipyretic

Styptic

Vulnerary

Uterine tonic

Astringent

Demulcent

Emmenagogue

Menstrual cycle regulator

Nervine tonic

Vasodilator



LADY'S MANTLE

Alchemilla vulgaris



Energetics

Cooling, drying, tonifying

Safe in pregnancy and breastfeeding

Potential interaction with Pitocin

Dose example

For heavy bleeding, mix with yarrow, shepherds purse and cinnamon, take 1/2 cup of infusion every 15 minutes until heavy bleeding eases

3ml fluid extract three times daily during luteal phase



REFERENCES

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