

VITEX AGNUS CASTUS

Agnus castus (*Vitex agnus castus* or chaste tree) is used for a wide range of conditions due to hormonal disturbances. The seeds of the plant are used.



Vitex agnus castus

- **Balances high oestrogen:** it reduces the body's production of oestrogen.
- **Balances low progesterone:** it also increases the production of progesterone.

There are a number of applications for a hormone balancing herb, including;

- Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) including nervous tension, mood swings and painful breasts.
- Irregular periods.
- Hormonal acne and headaches.
- Perimenopausal symptoms.
- A potential role in increasing fertility (under the guidance of a herbalist).

A place in history

Agnus castus was called "Chaste Tree" as it lowers 'sexual vitality'. For this reason monks used to sprinkle ground seeds onto their food, therefore it was also known as "Monk's Pepper".

Possible Use

Herbal tincture Doses vary depending on size, age and health of an individual. A typical dose to help with menstrual regulation could be 20 drops (1 ml) in a little water in the morning.

Cautions and Contraindications There are none identified, however it is not normally used if taking the pill, HRT (hormone replacement therapy) or other progesterogenic drugs.

After taking agnus castus for a period of time it is often recommended to stop taking it to see if your body has re-established its cycle.

Alternatives

Other herbs and supplements that could be used alongside, or instead of, agnus castus include:

Evening Primrose Oil (EPO) balances oestrogen levels by effectively reducing oestrogen activity where the levels are high, and increasing oestrogen activity when the levels are low. EPO has been shown to help in cases of PMS and breast pain (typically 2000mg a day).

Black Cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*) has oestrogenic properties useful when oestrogen levels are low.

Wild Yam (*Dioscorea villosa*) was the original source of steroidal hormones, including progesterone. Taking the herb, orally or topically, should increase progesterone levels.

Bartram T, 1998. *Encyclopaedia of Herbal Medicine*. Constable: London.

Chevallier A, 2001. *Encyclopaedia of Medicinal Plants*. Dorling Kindersley: London.

Contraindications & Precautions

The contents of this newsletter are for information and education purposes and to assist in the use of herbs. It is not intended to replace the advice of a professional.

HERBS FOR WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

Which herbs or supplements assist with weight management (loss or gain) is a common question. **There is no miracle pill**, for the simple reason that what may help one person may not help another. The cause for each person's weight problem is often different, and so is the solution. Examples are:

Problem	Solution	Reason
Low metabolic rate	Kelp	Helps to regulate the thyroid gland, which controls metabolism
Sugar cravings	Chromium	Helps to balance sugar levels, reducing cravings
Depression	5-HTP	To lighten the mood and reduce "comfort eating"

Weight increase can result from issues such as out of balance calorie intake and calorie expenditure. This can be due to **excess snacking** (often due to blood sugar issues), **reduced calorie expenditure** (due to changes as you get older, performing less exercise or changes in the body's metabolism [such as low thyroid function]). There are herbal and natural remedies that can help depending on the causes of the problem, but too many to list in this short article, however we are happy to help advise on possible solutions. It is important to remember that everyone is different, do not strive for someone else's ideal weight, but rather to be healthy and comfortable with who you are.

Reducing the urge to eat due to cravings, may combat **excessive snacking**. A number of supplements may be appropriate, but also look at adjusting your diet.

- Drink enough water.
- Reduce the amount of highly processed carbohydrate rich food you eat. These foods have a high glycaemic load (a measure of how quickly the sugars are released into the bloodstream). Less processed foods tend to release sugar into the bloodstream more slowly, giving a sustained release of energy and reducing sugar cravings. Oats are one possible choice.
- Ensuring adequate intake of key nutrients (e.g. chromium).

There are a huge range of books and magazine articles targeting specific

weight loss. Often friends and family can advise what they found successful.

What you eat (your diet) does have a role to play in short term weight loss, however eventually it is the combination of exercise, diet and outlook that are fundamental to health. **Low energy** leading to a lack of exercise is an incredibly common problem, and one for which there is not always a simple solution. Causes of low energy are many, including a lack of nutritional factors (e.g. iron and B vitamins). Low mood also decreases energy levels.

Being underweight is also an issue for some people. A number of nutritious herbs including nettle, slippery elm and alfalfa may be appropriate, and there are herbs that increase appetite and improve the digestion. Other useful strategies include: increasing both exercise and calorie intake; improving mood; and balancing the metabolism.

Support and help is available from many people or organisations, and need to not be overly expensive. Books and the web can provide a useful resource for information on diet, (rather than *dieting*) which is important to a long-term approach to healthy weight management. Therapists such as herbalists or nutritionists, as well as weight loss classes and exercise classes can play an important role too by providing support.

Cautions & contraindications: Extreme diet changes can affect many aspects of health. Seek advice from a medical professional before starting any weight change regime or taking supplements if you are on medication.

CLASSES & COURSES

Introduction to Indian Head Massage

Why not learn the theory and practice of Indian Head Massage? After the course you will be able to give friends and family a relaxing Indian Head Massage. Barney Green is the tutor.

Tuesday evenings at 7pm, starting 24th October for 4 weeks. The price is £50

Using Acupressure Points to Treat Common Ailments

This course introduces you to some simple acupressure points and combinations of acupressure points to treat conditions such as headaches, digestive problems and anxiety. It will involve the use of acupressure and magnets, and demonstrate how these can be used to treat yourself or others. Course tutors are acupuncturist Francesca Howell (MBACC) and shiatsu therapist John Williamson (MRSS).

Tuesday evenings 7pm starting on 21st November for 4 weeks. The price is £50

Introduction to Herbal Medicine

An introduction to herbal remedies with medical herbalist Bill Cleeve (MNIMH). Learn how herbs work, when to use them and how to make herbal medicines for home use and common ailments.

Monday evenings 7pm starting on 23rd October for 5 weeks. The price is £60

PRODUCTS

Co-Enzyme Q10

A number of key supplements have fallen in price significantly over the past few months making them more affordable than ever before. The reasons for the price reductions can be:

- New technology making their manufacture easier.
- Supply catching up with demand, as more manufacturing facilities are made.
- Improved cultivation, introducing viable sources of endangered herbs.

One of the supplements that has had the most significant reductions is Co-Enzyme Q10.

PRODUCTS (CONT)

CoQ10 is present in every cell in the body and is essential to energy release within them. Levels of CoQ10 fall with age and can have an impact on energy and heart function. In addition statins (a class of drug used to lower cholesterol) may also reduce the level of CoQ10 in the body. This makes it a popular supplement amongst older people.

Over the past 12 months the price from one of our suppliers (for 30 tablets of 30mg) has fallen from £11.99 to £7.99 making it a more viable option for many people.

Cautions & contraindications: Consult your doctor before taking CoQ10 if you are taking warfarin or on heart medication.

Celedrin

Celadrin is a new supplement that in the space of a few months is amongst the best selling supplements in the UK. It is thought to enhance the fluid that cushions within joints, maintaining flexibility.

The results seen by many people with inflammatory conditions such as arthritis, and initial trials with psoriasis have been very good. See celadrin.com for more details.

WOODLEY
HERBS

Special
Offer



40% OFF your first purchase of
Celadrin in the shop or by mail order.

RRP £19.99 for 60 capsules.

Terms and Conditions: Not valid with any other offer. Offer valid to 31st January 2007.

£50 Photo Competition

In the shop we have a very fetching re-useable cotton shopping bag, which costs only 50p. We are offering an annual prize of £50 to spend in the shop or clinic for most original photograph featuring one of our cotton bags. Pictures could be from Ayres Rock, snorkelling off the Isle of Skye or filled with plants from a herb garden in Wales; basically wherever and whatever you wish.

Photos can be entered by post, email or in person with your name and contact details. No photoshop modified entries please. Competition winner announced each September.

CLINIC

CLINICAL HYPNOTHERAPY

Clinical Hypnotherapist **David Waddell** has a long background in complementary therapies. He graduated from the London College of Clinical Hypnosis in 2003. He says:

"Hypnosis is a natural state that we all enter at times during the day. In hypnosis you are not in a trance, but merely relaxed.

In this relaxed state you are more receptive to suggestions given to you by the therapist. You only respond to suggestions that are appropriate for you.

Hypnotherapy is one of the most effective and quickest therapies for dealing with emotional, psychological and physical conditions. The use of hypnosis can result in profound, deep and long lasting changes to your behaviour, emotions and thoughts. These positive changes are often life changing.

Hypnotherapy is considered appropriate for almost everyone from children to the elderly, and it is untrue that some people cannot be hypnotized.

During the hypnotherapy session you are not asleep, and you are aware and in control at all times. The therapist works alongside you, together creating a team that works for your benefit.

For change to take place the subconscious mind must make the change. This is the reason hypnosis is so effective as it deals directly with the subconscious where all our habits, memories, fears and emotions lie."

Price: £45

Available: Thursday afternoons, although other times are available by appointment.

Newsletter Therapy Offer



One Session Stop Smoking

Only £70 (Normal price £90)



Terms & Conditions: Not valid with any other offer. Offer valid to 31st January 2007.

New Therapist: Mary Mitchell

We are happy to have recruited an experienced complementary therapist who will allow us to continue to meet the demand for some of our most popular therapies. Mary practices:

- Therapeutic massage
- Reiki
- Indian head massage
- Head, neck and shoulder seated massage

Price: £30 (1 hour)

Available: Tuesdays and Thursday mornings.

Evening Treatments



Appointments are available up to 9pm Monday to Friday. The therapies available are listed below.

Other therapies can normally be arranged for evenings if required.

Monday	Shiatsu
Tuesday	Sports Massage Therapeutic Massage Thai Yoga Massage Reiki Reflexology Aromatherapy
Wednesday	Acupuncture Counselling Herbal Medicine Aromatherapy Therapeutic Massage Pregnancy Massage Manual Lymph Drainage
Thursday	Herbal Medicine Reiki Hot Stone Massage Sports Massage Therapeutic Massage Aromatherapy
Friday	Shiatsu