

HOLISTIC HERBALISM ADVANCED CLINICAL PROGRAM MATERIA MEDICA

Common Name	Chaste Tree	
Latin	Vitex agnus-castus	
Family	Verbenaceae	
Other Known Names	Monk's Pepper, Vitex	
Energy	Warm, dry	
Taste	Pungent	
Part Used	Berries	
Location	It is native to the Mediterranean coast and has become naturalized in southern England.	
Gathering	The berries (fruit) when ripe in the late summer or early autumn.	
Cultivation	It needs only average soil, but good drainage and full sun. It is hardy from zone 6-9.	
HERBAL ACTION	TISSUE AFFINITY	MAJOR CONSTITUENTS
Antibacterial	HPA Axis/Pituitary	Iridoids:
Antioxidant	Female Reproductive System	Agnuside-prolactin inhibitor
Carminative	Male Reproductive System	Aucubin-prolactin inhibitor
Galactagogue	Digestion	Diterpenes:
Prolactin inhibitor	Nervous System	Rotundifuran-dopaminergic
Female reproductive tonic		Vitexilactone-dopaminergic
		Vitetrifolin B & C-dopaminergic
		Flavonoids:
		Vitexin-antioxidant
		Orientin-antioxidant
		Apigenin-antibacterial
		Casticin-antioxidant
		Luteolin-anti-inflammatory
		Cineole (Monoterpene)-anti-inflammatory

SPECIFIC INDICATIONS

Regulates the qi/female reproductive tonic
PMS symptoms including anxiety, food cravings and edema.
Hot flashes and other menopausal symptoms.

PRIMARY USES

- Chaste Tree was used in European monastic medicine to reduce libido in men, hence its common name, Monk's Pepper.
- Today it is primarily used to treat women's reproductive problems, especially if caused hyperprolactinemia. It is best known for relieving PMS symptoms such as anxiety, food cravings, migraines, edema and swollen, painful breasts also known as cyclic mastalgia.
- Vitex is useful for menstrual irregularities such as polymenorrhea, secondary amenorrhea, oligomenorrhea (menstrual cycles longer than 35 days), as well as menstrual headaches, irritability and herpes outbreaks that occur during menses.
- Chaste Tree is believed to work via the anterior pituitary, helping to regulate FSH ("it inhibits it") and LH ("it increases it"). It reduces elevated prolactin levels and it is indicated for progesterone insufficiency.
- Vitex can be beneficial for treating uterine fibroids, luteinizing hormone functional cysts and endometriosis.
- Chaste Berry helps to reregulate the menstrual cycle when coming off contraceptive pills and it can be effective in treating hormonal infertility (luteal phase dysfunction or hyperprolactinemia). It also can be useful for preventing 1st trimester miscarriages caused by corpus luteum insufficiency
- Chaste Berry can be an effective part of a program when addressing PCOS, see formula combinations for more details.
- Vitex may help reduce some teenage acne, as well as deep cystic acne.
- The seeds (contained in the berry) are carminative and can be used to relieve gas, nausea, abdominal bloating and borborygmus.
- Chaste Berry has been used to decrease libido in men, it may also help treat BPH.
- Traditionally Vitex has been used to increase milk flow in nursing mothers, but this is controversial as Vitex also shows prolactin-inhibiting activity.
- A related Chinese species, Vitex rotundifolia/Man Jing Zi is used to dispel liver wind and heat, especially affecting the eyes (eye pain). It is also used to resolve wind heat headaches, dizziness and painful joints caused by wind damp obstructions. It has very different uses than the European Chaste Tree and significant amounts of the "Chaste Tree" sold in the U.S. is actually the Chinese species.

FORMULA COMBINATIONS

- Combine Vitex with White Peony, Black Haw, Corydalis/Yan Hu Suo for treating menstrual headaches.
- For peri-menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes, night sweats, anxiety, agitation and skin crawling (formication) use Vitex with Black Cohosh, Sage, Motherwort, and Licorice. This formula is much more effective than Black Cohosh (the supposed "menopause herb") used as a monotherapy.
- For vaginal dryness, combine Chaste with Shatavari, Fresh Oat, Dang Gui and Licorice.
- For fibroids or ovarian cysts, combine Vitex with Cinnamon, White Peony, Ligusticum root/Chuan Xiong, or Tree Peony/Mu Dan Pi.
- To address PCOS, introduce a low glycemic index/load diet (which reduces insulin resistance), increase magnesium (200 mg BID) and chromium (200 mcg BID) intake and introduce a formula of White Peony, Licorice, Chaste Tree, Oregon Grape Root and Saw Palmetto. This protocol (with individual modifications) has been very successful in many cases.
- Combine Vitex with Saw Palmetto and Red Alder bark for deep cystic acne in teenagers.

DOSAGE

Tea (Infusion): 5 – 10 gram. dried berries, 250 ml. hot water, steep covered for 1 hour, take 100 ml. BID
Tincture (1:5), 60% ETOH Dose: 2-3 mL (40-60-gtt.) 1-2x/day
Chaste Berry accounts for 2 parts in formulation.

PREPARATIONS

European herbalists recommend a single dose of Vitex per day in the early morning. In a clinical trial of a standardized Vitex extract (standardized to casticin), at a low dose (8 mg) was not effective for treating PMS, while a moderate dose (20 mg) was effective. A slightly larger dose (30 mg) did not show any increase of efficacy.

Vitex leaves infused in oil make a useful massage oil for sore and stiff muscles.

CONTRAINDICATIONS & DRUG INTERACTIONS

Avoid use after the 3rd month of pregnancy.

Dopamine receptor antagonists (haloperidol) may inhibit the effectiveness of Vitex (theoretical).

Use Chaste Tree cautiously with topical progesterone creams as excessive elevation of progesterone can occur.

Occasional skin rashes, gastric upset, or headaches can occur when using Vitex. It can exacerbate PMS depression that is caused by elevated progesterone.

SPECIAL NOTES OF CONSIDERATION

An extract from Vitex seeds was found to be highly effective for repelling mosquitoes, ticks, biting flies, and fleas.

RESOURCES & REFERENCES

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