



# Wild Yam & Chaste Tree

Formula for balancing reproductive hormones and relieving cramps

This simple formula of two herbs can have beneficial effects in balancing women's hormones. The blend helps regulate excess estrogen in the body and gradually brings reproductive hormones back into balance. It will have a normalizing effect on the menstrual cycle when taken over a period of about six months.

Wild Yam & Chaste Tree helps to ease menstrual cramps. The formula may also help women who have been on birth control pills and are experiencing irregular cycles after discontinuing those pills.

It is also helpful for reducing "raging" hormones in teenagers to ease acne and other hormone related problems. The blend works for both teenage girls and teenage boys.

Here are benefits of the two herbs in this blend:

## Wild Yam (*Dioscorea villosa*)

Historically, wild yam been used to treat a variety of problems, such as cancer, diarrhea, colic, rheumatism. In large doses it has been used as a diuretic and an expectorant. Recently, it has also been shown to lower blood cholesterol levels. It has a cortisol-like action and can be used as an alternative to steroid drugs for pain and inflammation.

A popular herbal myth is that wild yam contains natural progesterone. This is not true. Wild yams contain a sapogenin called diosgenin. Diosgenin is a precursor to the industrial manufacture of the hormone progesterone, but there is no evidence that the human body is able to convert diosgenin into progesterone. In fact, studies of women taking wild yam show no increase in progesterone levels. In spite of the lack of a scientifically based reason, however, wild yam does appear to have a progesterone-like action and has a balancing effect on excess estrogen in the body.

What wild yam is really good for is reducing inflammation and muscle spasms. This makes it an excellent remedy for painful menstruation, but it also makes it a great remedy for intestinal cramps and inflammation.

There is a controversial use of wild yam as a natural method of birth control. Some women claim it works very well and yams are known to reduce fertility, but the mechanism by which this happens is not entirely understood. Although some women have used this formula as a natural aid to birth control, it would probably be unwise to rely on it as the sole method of birth control.

## Chaste Tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*)

Also known as vitex, chaste tree has an interesting history. Pilgrims believed the tree to have magical qualities and would carry its boughs to ward off robbers and deter the bites of venomous creatures. Even earlier, Athenian women put the leaves of the tree in their beds and monks ground up the seeds for pepper, both actions being taken to ensure chastity.

Although these stories seem humorous, chaste tree does appear to have the ability to balance hormones and calm excessive sexual desire. Modern research suggests that it acts on the pituitary to normalize the output of reproductive hormones. In women, this means that it tends to normalize the menstrual cycle. In teenagers, it helps with hormone-related acne and other hormone problems associated with puberty.

Dr. Alan Stewart conducted a study in which subjects were given capsules of dried chaste tree berries. 60% of the group experienced a reduction or elimination of PMS symptoms, including anxiety, nervous tension, insomnia and mood changes. Extracts from the chaste tree have also successfully been used for treating gynecological conditions, hyperprolactinemia, symptoms resulting from menopause and menstrual irregularities.

## Suggested Use

A typical dose of Wild Yam & Chaste Tree would be 1-2 capsules two to three times per day, depending on age, weight and the severity of the hormonal imbalances in the body. Wild Yam & Chaste Tree works gradually over time, so give it several months to gradually start regulating hormone production.

## Cautions

Chaste tree may reduce sexual desire. This effect tends to be much more common in men than women. This formula is not recommended for women who are trying to get pregnant as it may reduce fertility. It is probably not a good idea to take this formula while taking birth control pills or other female hormone replacement drugs. Consult your health care provider if pregnant or lactating. Very high doses could cause nausea, vomiting and mild headache.

## Selected References:

*Nutritional Herbology* by Mark Pedersen

*The Wild Rose Scientific Herbal* by Terry Willard, Ph.D.

*Weiner's Herbal* by Michael A. Weiner.

*The Encyclopedia of Herbs and Herbalism* by Malcom Stuart, Ed.

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