

Mid Life and the Lioness

Motherwort



“When women are approaching, going through, or passing out of menopause (peri menopause, menopause and post menopause) and they share with me their stories of hot flashes, night sweats, anxiety, panic attacks, depression, mood swings, insomnia, tachycardia, fluctuations in blood pressure and all of the other tales of woe related to changing female hormones and feminine biochemistry, there is one herb that comes to my mind and that stands above many possible choices and that herb is *Leonorus cardiaca* or Motherwort. *Leonorus cardiaca* means lion hearted and this herb is a member of the mint family.

Motherwort is a highly prized herbal heart medicine especially for tachycardia but is also quite useful for all heart conditions associated with anxiety and tension, including helping to lower high blood pressure.

Motherwort has been safely and effectively used by women and herbalists for centuries and is known to have been used by Greek and Roman physicians. Motherwort has also been used for similar purposes and disorders by the Chinese.

Here are a few studies on the benefits of Motherwort:

- In the German Commission E monographs Motherwort is recommended to treat nervous cardiac disorders and as an adjuvant therapy for thyroid disorders (*Blumenthal M et al, eds: German Commission E monographs therapeutic guide to herbal medicine, Austin, 1998*)
- Motherwort has been used in Chinese medicine to treat coronary heart disease in people with favorable results and laboratory studies in China have shown it has an anti-spasmodic action on heart muscle *cells* (*Kuang PG et al: J Tradit Chin Med 8(1):37-40, 1988*)
- In laboratory experiments Motherwort extracts have been shown to reduce high blood pressure and to exert a mild sedative and antispasmodic effect (*Arustamova FA: Izv Akad Nauk Arm SSR Biol Nauki 1963,16(7):47-52*)

Motherwort can be taken in several forms, the most common being an alcohol tincture (*extract*), an aqueous (*water*) infusion (*tea*), or in a powder form in capsules. For convenience I usually recommend the alcohol tincture. In some patients, and in some circumstances, Motherwort may increase menstrual bleeding. It does not always do this. I have found that the alcohol tincture is more likely to cause increased bleeding than in the tea form.

Motherwort alcohol tincture is readily available from almost any health food store. Please keep in mind that medical grade herbal medicines are commonly available throughout the European Union in pharmacies. This is not true in the United States.

The herb Motherwort can also be ordered in various forms online including the dried herb which is composed of the above ground parts, leaves and flowers of the plant. These parts of the herb may be ordered from Mountain Rose Herbs:

[Motherwort Herbal Link](#)

In terms of dosage, and I am talking about adults, if the alcohol tincture is being used then 10 to 20 drops per dose with 1 dose for mild cases or an hour before bed for insomnia or night sweats, 2 doses per day for more serious symptoms, and 3 doses per day for more difficult and persistent symptoms.

Motherwort is safe and nontoxic, so additional doses can be recommended as needed. Based on my experience of over 50 years Motherwort is one of those herbs where lower doses spread out over time are more effective than larger doses.

If Motherwort is being consumed as a tea I would suggest 2 cups per day separated by several hours. The choice of what form of Motherwort you chose to take, and how much will be largely based upon how you respond physically and mentally to this herbal medicine. Eventually, you will become the best judge of how and when to take it. Remember, for certain symptoms it can be consumed – as needed.

Motherwort is commonly used for the following conditions:

- *All heart related anxiety disorders*
- *Heart palpitations*
- *Tachycardia related to menopause*

- *Migraine related to menopause*
 - *Menstrual cramps*
- *Pelvic inflammation (PID)*
 - *PMS*
 - *Insomnia*

In the US medical literature there is concern regarding Motherwort and pregnancy, but historically Motherwort was commonly used for complaints during pregnancy and with Red Raspberry Leaf prior to delivery. The German Commission E indicates that Motherwort is safe to use during pregnancy. However, I never recommend it or any herb that may increase uterine contractions during pregnancy until late in the final trimester of the pregnancy, especially in first time moms where the risk factors are unknown.

Please note that the standard American diet, high in meat, animal fat, sugar, alcohol, and caffeine will greatly worsen and intensify your symptoms related to the stages of menopause. *“So why can a French woman in Paris walk into a pharmacy and buy a Motherwort tincture, but an American woman cannot walk into a pharmacy in any US city and buy it?”*

For my Baha’i readers, please note that the guidance in the Baha’i writings indicates that disease should be treated first by diet and herbs, and if that fails, to resort to prescription medication, but if that medication proves to be worse than the disease, to stop using it.

The caution to follow is not because Motherwort is not safe to use (*it is a very safe herb*), but rather because it may not be safe to use with prescription drugs used to treat high blood pressure or heart disease.

In my previous two posts on the use of mullein and sweet basil the use of these two very safe and effective herbs for minor pain, inflammation, respiratory issues, and gastric upset, was very simple and straightforward. The brief recommendations to follow on Motherwort (*Leonorus cardiaca*) are a different situation because of the cardiac symptoms that it may be used to treat. If you are being treated for menopausal related cardiac issues, please read the next paragraph.

If you are currently on heart or blood pressure medication talk with your cardiologist before using Motherwort. I treat patients with herbal medicine and I recommend that patients only use synthetic medicines when diet and herbal medicine is not effective (I have never treated a menopausal issue where it was not). I do not interfere between a patient and their allopathic or osteopathic physician and I do not remove patients from their prescription drugs.

Vitex Agnus Castus or Chasterberry Tree, Herb



A caveat to the information in the above herbal, motherwort a valuable herbal medicine that more women should be educated and knowledgeable about but, I would be remiss if I did not mention Vitex Agnus Castus or Chasterberry Tree.

In my practice I have recommended Vitex to women in perimenopause, menopause, and post menopause, as well as, for PMS, PID, Endometriosis, Ovarian Cysts, Fibrocystic Breast Disorder, and various forms of menstrual irregularity more than any other herbal remedy.

In the interest of being brief I will not recount the centuries of safe use of Chasterberry. Many European physicians prescribe plants and herbs such as chasterberry as a treatment of choice over synthetic pharmaceuticals or hormone analogs. Chasterberry has been used for “luteal phase disorders” which typically results from low progesterone levels.

Chasterberry or Vitex (you can use either name) is a good answer to the xenoestrogen onslaught that women and men undergo. Xenoestrogens result from drugs, chemicals, and plastics in our food, beverage, and water supply. Xenoestrogen along with clinical obesity are a cause of hormonal imbalance.

Chasterberry contains naturally occurring progestins which explains its efficacy and ability to offset the work of the antagonistic estrogen and xenoestrogens.

There is a complicated interplay among the various hormones that regulate hormonal activities in the female body. The allopathic or osteopathic physician approaches hormonal imbalances and the symptoms and disorders of hormonal imbalance by prescribing synthetic or “bioidentical” hormones.

Often these medical hormones cause further imbalances and increase the risk of reproductive system cancers, vascular and heart disease, blood clots and strokes. Why take the risk?

Additionally, these doctors will also prescribe dangerous and harmful medications for insomnia (hypnotics and sedatives) and very concerning psychotropic and anti-depressant medications. Many of these drugs have severe side effects, aren't all that effective to begin with, and can lead to increased depression, addiction, or suicide.

If it wasn't for the power and money of pharmaceutical companies, and if female health, wellbeing, and safety was the goal, I do not believe that these drugs would be allowed to be prescribed.

Why not use safe and effective natural alternatives?

Vitex Herbal Link

So how do you choose between Motherwort and Vitex? It is your symptoms that indicate which of the two herbs to use. If your symptoms focus heavily around emotional mood swings, depression, anxiety and heart problems then Motherwort is the herb of choice. If your symptoms center around hot flashes, sweats, anxiety, and insomnia then Vitex may be the correct choice. If you have been told by your endocrinologist that you have a problem with the luteal phase of your cycle then Vitex is the remedy for you.

You can choose one or the other, or you can use both (depending upon your symptoms) and simply alternate the dose of each throughout the day.

I normally recommend Vitex as an alcohol tincture (extract) at a dosage level of 20 drops (I rarely go over 30) in a small amount of warm or hot water. (The hot water helps to evaporate some of the alcohol out of the liquid.) Vitex is commonly taken in 2 or 3 doses per day, and this is based upon the frequency and severity of your symptoms. Vitex can also be taken as needed to treat a flare up of acute symptoms.

For Baha'is who are prohibited by Baha'i law from consuming alcohol heating the Vitex in hot water will reduce the alcohol but not eliminate all of it. However, if the alcohol tincture is prescribed by a licensed physician you can consume it because it is a prescribed medication. There are other forms of Vitex tinctures that are not alcohol based. In my experience, I have not found them to be as effective but perhaps they will work for you.

If you are interested in learning more about herbs for menopause visit this website:

Menopause Link

I have some new friends following these writings, so I will add this information. I began my studies of herbal medicine in 1970, I taught my first college classes (Lake Michigan Community College) in 1969 on drug addiction. I am licensed to practice Chiropractic, Naprapathy, and Acupuncture in 3 states; Michigan, Illinois, and Idaho. I founded the Blue Heron Academy of Healing Arts and Sciences in 1980. I am a Baha'i and I follow the Baha'i guidance on health and healing which includes recommendations for diet, herbal, and homeopathic medicine.

If you are moved to try any of the herbs that I am discussing I suggest that you seek out and consult with a qualified herbalist or naturopath in your area. If you are on various allopathic or osteopathic drugs you will need to consult with them about possible drug/herb interactions and perhaps how to get off their medications. Never stop taking a drug on your own. Synthetic pharmaceuticals are highly toxic, often addictive, and can cause serious side effects when stopped abruptly.”

**This Article was Written by,
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Contraindications and Warnings Below

Motherwort Medication Interactions & Warning

Are there safety concerns?

Motherwort is POSSIBLY SAFE for most people when taken by mouth appropriately. Side effects include diarrhea, stomach irritation, uterine bleeding, sleepiness, and allergic reactions. Contact with the skin can cause rashes and increased sensitivity to the sun.

Special Precautions & Warnings:

Pregnancy and breast-feeding:

Taking motherwort by mouth during pregnancy is **LIKELY UNSAFE** and should be avoided. Motherwort can stimulate the uterus and might cause a miscarriage.

There is not enough reliable information about the safety of taking motherwort if you are breast-feeding. Stay on the safe side and avoid use.

Heart conditions:

Motherwort can interfere with the treatment of heart conditions. If you have a heart condition, get your healthcare provider's advice before starting motherwort.

Surgery:

Motherwort can slow down (*sedate*) the central nervous system (*CNS*). There is a concern that when combined with anesthesia and other medications used during and after surgery, motherwort might cause too much sedation. Stop using motherwort at least 2 weeks before a scheduled surgery.

Uterine bleeding:

Motherwort may be able to stimulate uterine blood flow, which is why some women try it for starting their periods. If you have a uterine bleeding condition, use motherwort with caution, since it might make this condition worse.

Are there any interactions with medications?

Sedative medications (*CNS depressants*)

Interaction Rating: Moderate Be cautious with this combination.

Talk with your health provider.

Motherwort might cause sleepiness and drowsiness. Medications that cause sleepiness are called sedatives. Taking motherwort along with sedative medications might cause too much sleepiness.

Some sedative medications include

clonazepam (*Klonopin*), lorazepam (*Ativan*), phenobarbital (*Donnatal*), zolpidem (*Ambien*), and others.



Neuromuscular Wellness

Health + Life + Balance