

# St. John's Wort: Nature's Answer to Depression

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Herbalists have prized St. John's Wort (*Hypericum Perforatum*) for centuries. It is valued for its antidepressant action and is often given to treat nerve pain following injury due to its effective action on the central nervous system. Taken internally, St. John's Wort has a sedative and pain reducing effect which gives it a place in the treatment of neuralgia (nerve pain), anxiety, tension and similar problems. The yellow flowers of this plant contain the chemical compounds hypericin and hyperforin, these active ingredients produce the herb's effects.

Just recently completed in early 2005 and published in the *British Medical Journal* a study examining 251 adults with mild to moderate depression demonstrated the effectiveness of hyperforin-rich St. John's Wort extract\* (doses of approximately 500 – 1000mg/day) comparable to the efficacy of synthetic antidepressants in their normally prescribed doses.

Moreover, St. John's Wort is especially regarded as a herb to use when there are menopausal changes triggering irritability and anxiety. And used externally, it is a very valuable healing and anti-inflammatory remedy.

As with any medication or herb, a health care professional should be contacted before use, especially if other medications are taken simultaneously.

*\* In the treatment of depression it should be taken for at least one month as it may be slow in action*