

SAW PALMETTO

(*Serenoa repens*)

Clinical Summary

Actions

- Anti-inflammatory
- Antiprostatic
- Male Tonic
- Antispasmodic
- Expectorant
- Antiseptic
- Diuretic

Indications

- Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), erectile dysfunction, male infertility.
- Cystitis, urethritis, incontinence, bed wetting.
- Polycystic ovarian disease, infertility associated with elevated oestrogen and testosterone combined with low progesterone, ovarian pain, cystic acne, androgenic alopecia, hirsutism.
- Bronchitis, asthma, colds, congestion, coughs, irritated throats, whooping cough, acute and chronic catarrh, chronic laryngitis, chronic sore throat.

Traditional Use

The Seminole people of Florida prepared an aqueous infusion of the fruit to treat stomach-ache and dysentery. Other sources indicate that native Americans used the fruit as a diuretic and sexual tonic.

Energetics

Pungent, sweet, warming, moistening.

Constituents

Lipids, primarily free fatty acids, fatty acid esters, triglycerides, sterols, acidic polysaccharides, phenolic acids, gallic acid, flavonoids (rutin, isoquercitrin, and astragalin) and carotenoids.

Use in Pregnancy

Use of saw palmetto during pregnancy is contraindicated due to the herb's hormonal effects. In clinical practice it is not used in pregnancy.

Contraindications and Cautions

Take with meals to avoid minor complaints such as gastrointestinal upset, constipation, nausea, abdominal pain and diarrhoea. If symptoms of BPH worsen, blood is detected in the urine or acute urinary retention occurs, professional reassessment is required.

Drug Interactions

Avoid saw palmetto if the patient is undergoing radiotherapy for prostate cancer. Caution with anticoagulant/antiplatelet drugs. Caution with oestrogenic drugs. Monitor for signs of decreased drug effects when taking androgenic drugs. While there is no evidence of negative interactions patients should be monitored when taking finasteride and other drugs used for BPH. This combination may be beneficial which may improve disease management.

Administration and Dosage

Liquid extract 1:2 in 65% alcohol
15 to 30mL weekly