

# Taking Hormones? These Herbs Are For You!

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## Introduction

More and more American women are using herbal remedies to help them with menopausal problems. Those who do take ERT (estrogen replacement) or HRT (hormone replacement) may be surprised to discover that herbal medicine has a lot to offer them as well.

Herbs for women on ERT/HRT include those that alleviate side-effects as well as those that counter problems caused by the hormones.



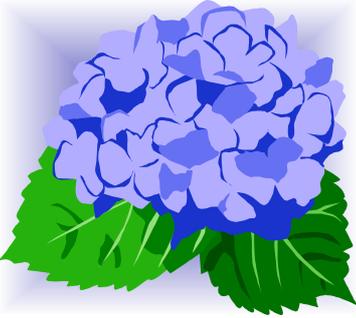
## Herbal Helpers Counter Side Effects: Water Retention

Water Retention is the symptom most often cited for dissatisfaction with hormone replacement. Herbal tinctures and tea, such as dandelion or cleavers, and ordinary foods can not only relieve the distress, they will go to the root of the problem and help prevent recurrences.

- ◇ **Dandelion root tincture** (*Taraxacum officinale*) strengthens the liver and helps it process out the excess hormones you are taking. When the liver works well, the kidneys work better, and tissues no longer bloat. A dose is 10-20 drops in several ounces of water or juice 2-3 three times a day. If you have any digestion problems, take your dandelion before meals; otherwise, anytime is fine. You can safely take dandelion daily for months or years if you need or want to.
- ◇ **Cleavers herb tincture** (*Galium molluga*) tells the lymphatic tissues to get moving. Relief from edema is usually rapid when 20-30 drops are taken in several ounces of water or juice. Repeat up to six times at hourly intervals if needed. Cleavers is especially helpful for easing swollen, sore breasts.
- ◇ **Foods** that relieve water retention include (in order of effectiveness): asparagus, nettles, corn (and corn silk tea), grapes, cucumbers, watermelon (and watermelon seed tea), parsley, celery, black tea, and green tea.

## Herbal Helpers Counter Side Effects: Headaches

Headaches are the second most common side-effect of hormone use. Unfortunately, they are common among menopausal women not taking hormones too. Herbs that help relieve headache without a drug-like action - such as dandelion, yellow dock, milk thistle, burdock, garden sage, skullcap, and St. John's/Joan's wort - are generally considered safe to take with hormones.



- ◇ Chinese herbalists say headaches are caused by liver stress. My favorite liver-strengthening herbs are **dandelion, yellow dock, milk thistle seed** and **burdock**. I use one at a time, 15-25 drops of the tincture several times a day, for two weeks. If symptoms continue, I switch to a different herb.
- ◇ A strong tea of **garden sage leaves** (*Salvia officinalis*) offers immediate relief from headaches and helps prevent future ones. It also reduces night sweats.
- ◇ Tinctures of **skullcap** (*Scutellaria lateriflora*) and **St. Joan's/John's wort** (*Hypericum perforatum*) ease pain and relieve muscle spasms. Use 5-20 drops of skullcap and a dropperful of St.J's at the very first sign - no, the very first thought, of a headache. Repeat the doses every five minutes until pain free. Skullcap can be quite sedative, especially in large doses.

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## Herbal Allies That Prevent Problems Caused by Taking Hormones: Breast Cancer

Breast Cancer risk is increased 20% in women who use ERT for five or more years. Use of HRT for five or more years increases breast cancer risk by 40%. Each five years of continued use increases the risk. In addition, women who take ERT are far more likely to get uterine or endometrial cancers. All women on hormones increase their risks of lung and ovarian cancer, too. Nourishing herbs such as red clover, and foods such as beans and yogurt, offer easy ways to stay cancer-free.

- ◇ **Red clover blossoms** (*Trifolium pratense*), when dried and brewed into a strong infusion (one ounce herb steeped in a quart of boiling water for at least four hours) prevent cancer by providing phytoestrogens that counter the cancer-promoting effects of oral hormones. Usual dose is 2-4 cups a day. The infusion tastes like black tea and can be flavored with mint if you like.
- ◇ **Beans**, especially lentils, but also yellow split peas, black turtle beans, baby limas, Anasazi beans, and red kidney beans are also rich sources of anti-cancer phytoestrogens. Since uncooked beans and unfermented soy contain anti-nutritional factors that may promote bone loss and dementia, soy "milk" and tofu are not recommended. Miso and tamari definitely help to prevent breast cancer but soy isoflavones may promote it.
- ◇ **Yogurt** helps build powerful immunity. Women who eat a quart of yogurt a week have 700% less cancer than women who eat no yogurt.

*“Women who eat a quart of yogurt a week have 700% less cancer than women who eat no yogurt.”*

## Herbal Allies That Prevent Problems Caused by Taking Hormones: Dry Eyes

Dry Eyes afflict more than 9% of women using ERT and over 7% of those on HRT. Risk increases by 70% for every year of continued use. And the longer a woman uses hormones, the greater her risk. Herbs such as oatstraw, chamomile and chickweed can help relieve and prevent this problem.

◇ **Oatstraw infusion** (*Avena sativa*) cools and moistens your eyes from the inside out, builds strong bones too. Use one ounce of dried herb in a quart jar; fill to the top with boiling water and cap tightly. Let steep four or more hours. Dose is 2-4 cups a day. Refrigerate after straining.

◇ **Cucumber slices** ease dry eyes; so do **chamomile tea bags**.

◇ The ultimate ally for women with dry eyes is **fresh chickweed** (*Stellaria media*), applied as a poultice to the closed eyes. Leave on for five minutes, or until the plant material feels warm (it will heat up). Repeat as needed.



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## Herbal Allies That Prevent Problems Caused by Taking Hormones: Stroke & Heart Attack

Stroke and Heart Attack are actually increased by use of ERT/HRT, though modern medicine has long proclaimed the opposite. Every major double-blind study done to date has created a larger and larger gap between ERT/HRT's supposed ability to help cardiovascular health and its actual results. Protect your heart with nourishing and tonifying herbs and foods such as motherwort, hawthorn, and cherries.



◇ **Motherwort** (*Leonurus cardiaca*) tincture helps the heart. The Japanese claim it is their secret of longevity. A dose is 5-15 drops, twice a day. Motherwort also relieves hot flashes, calms tachycardia, and eases anxiety. It's an all-in-one remedy for menopausal women.

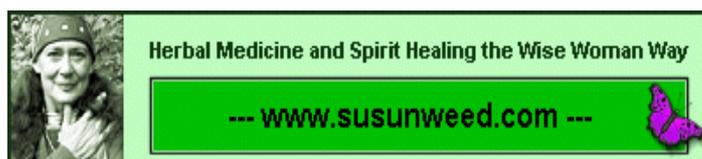
◇ **Hawthorn** (*Crataegus oxycantha*) flowers, leaves, and fruits are all used to maintain heart health and control fluid build-up in heart tissues. A dose is 20-30 drops of tincture 2-4 times a day, or a cup of tea with meals. This widespread shrub is considered one of the finest heart tonics in the world.

◇ **Cherries** are even better than apples at keeping the doctor away. Dried cherries and cherry juice, even tincture of cherries.

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## Summary

More than three-quarters of the women in America over the age of fifty have refused ERT/HRT. If you want to join them, taper off your dosage slowly, while continuing to use nourishing and tonifying herbs such as dandelion, motherwort, red clover, oatstraw, and seaweed. And pick up a copy of ***New Menopausal Years the Wise Woman Way, Alternative Approaches for Women 30-90***. Meanwhile, these Wise Woman hints can help you stay healthy and counter the detrimental effects of hormone replacement.



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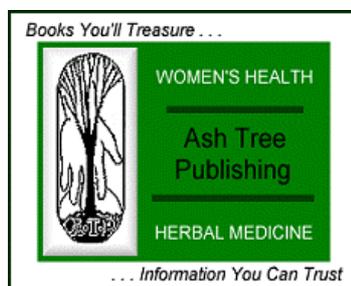
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