Chasteberry
Snapshot Monograph

**Chasteberry** (*Vitex agnus-castus*)

Most Frequent Reported Uses:
- Helps balance pituitary function.
- Helps balance sex hormonal levels for men and women.
- Reported progesterone like effects.
- Used in insufficient lactation and hyperprolactenemia.
- Used for breast discomfort after childbirth.

**Herb Name:**
Chasteberry, Chaste tree, Chaste tree berry, Vitex (*Vitex agnus-castus*) fruit

**Introduction:**
The chaste tree originated in the Mediterranean but is now found worldwide as an ornamental shrub. Its fruit is harvested and dried for medicinal purposes. It has a long folk history of use in women’s health. The berry of the chaste tree has been recommended for use in mild to moderate complaints, especially in endometriosis, menopause, and PMS symptoms.

**Functions:**
Orally, chasteberry is used for menstrual irregularities including dysmenorrhea, secondary amenorrhea, metrorrhagia, oligomenorrhea, and polymenorrhea (He et al, 2009; Doll et al, 2009). Chasteberry is also used for symptoms of menopause, for symptoms of premenstrual syndrome (PMS) including cyclical mastalgia, luteal-phase dysfunction (corpus luteum insufficiency), and other symptoms. It is also used orally for treating female infertility, preventing miscarriage in patients with progesterone insufficiency, controlling postpartum bleeding, aiding in expulsion of the placenta,
increasing lactation, and treating fibrocystic breasts. It is used for promoting urination, treating benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), and reducing sexual desire. Chasteberry is also used for acne.

The actual activity of the constituents of chasteberry is not fully established at this time. Studies have reported it to have significant effect on the pituitary (Jarry et al, 1994). Studies point to a progesterone-like component and effect. Studies report that vitex stimulates luteinizing hormone (LH) and inhibits follicle stimulating hormone (FSH). Because of this activity, vitex has been recommended for a variety of female complaints, such as PMS, amenorrhea, menopausal symptoms, endometriosis, and hyperprolactinemia. Several studies have reported beneficial effects of vitex on female-related disorders (Loch et al, 2009; Propping et al, 1991). Several clinical studies have reported beneficial results with using chasteberry in treating women with infertility associated with corpus luteum deficiency. A multicentric non-interventional trial (open study without control) was conducted to study the efficacy and tolerance of chasteberry extract in 1634 patients suffering PMS (Berger et al, 2000). Four major symptoms of PMS were monitored, including depression, anxiety, craving and hyperhydration. After a treatment period of three menstrual cycles, 93% of patients reported a decrease in the number of symptoms or even cessation of PMS complaints. Mastodynia was still present after 3 months of therapy but were generally less severe than before treatment. A combination of chasteberry and St. John’s wort (Hypericum perforatum) was found in a double-blind, randomized, placebo-controlled parallel trial to be superior to placebo for total PMS-like scores including anxiety (van Die et al, 2009).

Chasteberry may also be of benefit in acne, as human data reports increasing healing while using a chasteberry preparation.

Due to dopaminergic activity, it has been postulated that chasteberry may be used in the management of Parkinson’s disease, although no clinical research has been performed to support that theory.

**Dosage:**
- 200-400mg every morning, preferably on an empty stomach, either 1 hour before or 2 hours after breakfast, standardized to contain at least 0.5% agnuside and 0.6% aucubin;
- OR 4mg daily standardized to 6% agnuside.

*Note: There are various products with different dosages and standardizations to choose from. When choosing a dietary supplement, select those from reputable manufacturers.

**Side Effects and Warnings:**
- Chasteberry has been reported to be safe in recommended doses.
- Do not use in pregnancy. Laboratory studies report emmenagogue and uterine stimulant activity.
• Do not use chasteberry supplements if trying to use contraception to prevent pregnancy. Chasteberry may inhibit FSH and increase LH, causing progesterone to rise and lengthening the luteal phase. A clinical study in China reported that an extract of vitex prolonged menstrual period in some patients (Ma et al, Gynaecol Endocrinol 2010).
• Chasteberry supplements should only be used under the supervision of a practitioner if hormonally related cancers, such as breast, prostate or uterine, is a concern.
• Caution should be use if taking the following medications with chasteberry:
  • Based on pharmacology, use with caution with dopamine agonists such as haloperidol, metoclopramide or levodopa.
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Patient Snapshot

**Uses:**
- Chasteberry may help support healthy hormone levels in both men and women.
- Chasteberry is reported to help balance progesterone levels. Healthy progesterone levels are associated with improved mood, decreased anxiety, improved bone health and may decrease the risk of developing breast cancer.

**Dosage:***
- The most common dose of chasteberry is 200-400mg every morning, preferably on an empty stomach, either 1 hour before or 2 hours after breakfast, standardized to contain at least 0.5% agnuside and 0.6% aucubin;
- OR 4mg daily standardized to 6% agnuside.

*Note: There are various products with different dosages and standardizations to choose from. When choosing a dietary supplement, select those from reputable manufacturers. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist.*

**Special Concerns:**
- If you are taking prescription or non-prescription medications or have a pre-existing medical condition, talk with your healthcare provider before taking any dietary supplement.
- Do not take if there is an allergy to any component of this dietary supplement.
- Do not use in pregnancy.
- Do not use if using or taking contraception.
- Individuals on any of the following medications should only take chasteberry under a doctor's supervision:
  - Dopamine agonists including haloperidol (Haldol), metoclopramide (Reglan) or levodopa (Sinemet).
  - Those with concern for hormonally related cancers, such as breast, uterine or prostate.

**DISCLAIMER:** Statements made are for educational purposes and have not been evaluated by the US Food and Drug Administration. They are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. If you have a medical condition or disease, please talk to your doctor prior to using the recommendations given.
References:


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