

BLACK COHOSH

WHAT IS IT?

Black cohosh is one of the highest selling herbs in the United States and is popular as an alternative to hormonal therapy in the treatment of menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes, mood disturbances, diaphoresis, palpitations, and vaginal dryness. It does not bind to estrogen receptors. Black cohosh seems to have effects like the hormone estrogen, but it is not known exactly how it works. The root is used to make medicine.

WHAT IS IT USED FOR?

Hot flashes-breast cancer survivors (possibly effective)

Nervous tension

Menopause (hot flashes)

Osteoporosis

Painful menstruation

Rheumatism

RESEARCH/STUDIES

- Study results are mixed on whether or not Black cohosh relieves hot flashes.
- Most studies have been done in Europe using the product Remifemin which have had positive results.
- Difficult to compare results of studies because different doses and products were used and the studies were conducted over different time periods-some lasted 8 weeks, others 12 weeks.

IS IT SAFE?

- There have been case reports on black cohosh and liver damage but evidence is not conclusive.
- Black cohosh has been used safely for up to 6 months. Long term safety information is not available.

SIDE EFFECTS

- Generally well tolerated in doses up to 6 months
- Stomach discomfort/upset
- Rash
- Tiredness
- Headache
- Dizziness

- Weight gain
- Leg heaviness
- Breast discomfort
- Vaginal spotting or bleeding

WARNINGS AND PRECAUTIONS

- AVOID if allergic to black cohosh, buttercup, or crowfoot.
- May affect actions of Tamoxifen and Raloxifene (Evista).
- Black cohosh may lower blood pressure.