

Lavender Uses: Treatment of anxiety, restlessness, insomnia, and depression. Studies have shown mixed results. Most commonly used in aromatherapy. **Caution:** Can cause drowsiness. Topical use of diluted lavender oil or use of lavender as aromatherapy is generally considered safe for most adults. However, lavender oil can be poisonous if taken orally, and applying lavender oil to the skin can cause irritation. There have been reports that topical use can cause breast growth in young boys. **Saw Palmetto Uses:** Thought to improve symptoms with benign prostatic hypertrophy; however, research concluded that it was not more effective than placebo. **Caution:** Saw palmetto appears to be well tolerated by most users. It may cause mild side effects, including stomach discomfort. **Soy Uses:** May slightly lower levels of LDL ("bad") cholesterol. Some studies suggest that soy isoflavone supplements may reduce hot flashes in women after menopause; however, the results have been inconsistent. **Caution:** Minor stomach and bowel problems such as nausea, bloating, and constipation are possible. **The safety. St. John's Wort Uses:** Short-term treatment of mild to moderate depression. Although some studies have reported benefits for more severe depression, others have not; for example, a large study sponsored by the NCCAM found that the herb was no more effective than placebo in treating major depression of moderate severity. **Cautions:** Can cause photosensitivity, particularly in fair-skinned individuals; contraindicated when other antidepressants are used. Other side effects can include anxiety, dry mouth, dizziness, gastrointestinal symptoms, fatigue, headache, or sexual dysfunction. Can interact with antidepressants, birth control pills, cyclosporine, digoxin, indinavir (and possibly other drugs used to control HIV infection), irinotecan (and possibly other drugs used to treat cancer), seizure-control drugs (e.g., dilantin and phenobarbital), and warfarin and related anticoagulants. **Valerian Use:** Sedative, but there is not enough evidence from well-designed studies to confirm this. Safe to use for short periods of time (4 to 6 weeks). **Caution:** Can cause mild side effects, such as headaches, dizziness, upset stomach, and tiredness the morning after its use. Do not use with barbiturates.