



Cimicifuga racemosa

BLACK COHOSH

Scientific Name: Cimicifuga racemosa

Family: ranunculaceae

Common Names: Sqaw Root, Rattlesnake Root, Black Root, Black Snakeroot, Baneberry, Bugbane, Bugwort, Richweed ^(2,6)

Active Ingredients/MOA:

- Rhizome and root contain formononetin, an isoflavone or phytoestrogen ⁽³⁾. It's thought that formononetin binds to estrogen receptors and suppresses lutenizing hormone ⁽²⁾.
- Root contains triterpineglycosides; cimifugaside, 27-deoxyactein, actein, 26-deoxycimicifugoside. These are thought to suppress lutenizing hormone by binding to the estrogen receptor ⁽¹⁾
- Remifemin studies have shown that formononetin is not present in Cimicifuga racemosa extract. Cimicifuga racemosa does contain triterpineglycosides, which modulate the estrogen receptor without influencing the levels of circulating FSH and LH.
- Contains salicylic acid ⁽²⁾

Indications:

- Alternative hormone replacement for menopausal symptoms; hot flashes, night sweats, HA, heart palpitations, dizziness, vaginal atrophy, tinnitus ^(2,4)
- Dysmenorrheal, dyspepsia, rheumatism, sore throat, cough, snake bite, insect repellent ⁽²⁾
- Bronchial infections, labor/postpartum pain, depression ⁽³⁾

Efficacy:

- One study showed no estrogenic effects in black cohosh. The researchers showed that black cohosh compared to estradiol did not cause estrogen-dependent breast cancer cells (MCF-7) to proliferate. In addition, the researchers used estrogen receptor cells incubated with either estradiol or black cohosh and the results showed that estradiol increased the transcriptional activity of the estrogen receptor cells, however, black cohosh had no effect on the cells. If black cohosh had an estrogen effect than it would be able to proliferate estrogen-dependent cancer cells and increase transcriptional activity of estrogen receptor cells. Therefore, black cohosh exerts its effects in another way, which is not clear. From this study black cohosh may be used if HRT is contraindicated or refused⁽⁷⁾. However this is bench research and human toxicology studies have not been performed.
- A randomized, double blind controlled parallel group study showed black cohosh exerts its effects without estrogen like effects. They studied two different doses of Remifemin (39mg and 127.3mg) in 150 perimenopausal and postmenopausal women. Both doses decreased the value of the Kupperman Menopause Index (commonly used to evaluate safety and efficacy in menopausal trials, the higher the number the more symptoms the subjects are experiencing). At baseline the lower dose had a baseline Kupperman Index of 30.1 and the higher dose of 31. At the end of 12 weeks the Kupperman Index decreased to 8 in the low dose and 7 in the high dose⁽⁹⁾.
- Clinical research using Remifemin[®] showed a 56% decrease in symptoms after 4 weeks, 65% decrease in symptoms after 8 weeks and 70% decrease in symptoms after 12 weeks⁽⁸⁾

Contraindications:

- Pregnancy/lactation⁽⁵⁾

Allergy:

- Use with caution in patients with aspirin allergy⁽²⁾

Dosage and Administration:

- 0.3-2g dried rhizome/root po TID⁽²⁾
- Decoction po TID – boil dried rhizome/root, then simmer 5-10 minutes and strain⁽²⁾
- 0.3 – 2ml liquid extract (1:1 90% alcohol)⁽²⁾
- 2 – 4ml tincture (1:10 60% alcohol)⁽²⁾
- 1g powdered root po TID⁽²⁾
- Remifemin[®] 20mg po BID⁽⁸⁾

*Use no longer than 6 months^(1,2)

Adverse Effects:

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Reviewed 5/8/03 Susan Paulsen Pharm D

- A review article showed only mild side effects from using black cohosh. The main side effect being gastrointestinal complaints. The study mentioned that it is difficult to obtain side effect profiles on any herbal product because patients do not report side effects and trials do not focus on side effects⁽¹⁰⁾.

Drug Interactions:

- Alcohol – may potentiate side effects and toxicity⁽²⁾
- Heparin – may potentiate side effects and toxicity⁽²⁾
- NSAID – may potentiate side effects and toxicity⁽²⁾
- Beta Blocker – impairs effectiveness⁽²⁾

* Black cohosh contains salicylic acid. It is unclear how much salicylic acid black cohosh contains. Therefore, these drug interactions are only speculation⁽²⁾.

Drug-Disease Interactions:

- Asthma⁽²⁾
- PUD⁽²⁾

* Black cohosh contains salicylic acid. It is unclear how much salicylic acid black cohosh contains. Therefore, these drug interactions are only speculation.

References:

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