

Medicines Management & Pharmacy Services (MMPS)**St John's wort (SJW)**

St John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), has been shown to have some effect in the treatment of mild to moderate depression.

The active component has not yet been determined and also what constitutes a therapeutic dose is unknown.

Most preparations are unlicensed and the constituents of different brands vary.

Adverse effects

Generally well tolerated with a lower incidence of side-effects reported than for other antidepressants.

Reported side-effects are dry mouth, nausea, constipation, fatigue, dizziness, headache and restlessness.

SJW contains a red pigment, which may cause photosensitivity reactions.

SJW can precipitate hypomania in people with bipolar affective disorder.

Drug interactions

SJW is an inducer of hepatic (CYP3A4 and CYP2C) and intestinal enzymes resulting in the lowering of plasma levels of several hepatically metabolised drugs.

CYP3A4 activity returns to normal about 7 days after SJW is discontinued.

Medicines known to be affected are warfarin, antivirals, digoxin, ciclosporin, oestrogens, progestogens and theophylline.

See BNF Appendix 1: interactions for more details.

For further information on SJW, see: [St John's wort for major depression - The Cochrane Library - Linde - Wiley Online Library](#)

References

- (1) Maudsley Prescribing Guidelines; 11th edition; 2012
- (2) BNF 64; September 2012

For further information: www.choiceandmedication.org/leedsandyorkpft

Provenance

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