

Herbs

Saw Palmetto/Sabal

Serenoa repens

What is the folklore use of saw palmetto?

Traditionally, saw palmetto has been used as a diuretic to increase urine flow and as therapy for inflammation of the bladder. It also has been suggested to enlarge breasts in females and to increase sexual vigor and sperm count in males.

What is saw palmetto?

Saw palmetto, also known as sabal, is a plant that produces dark red berries that seem to have medicinal benefits.



What are the proposed medicinal uses of saw palmetto?

In Europe, it is used to treat prostate enlargement. The active compound in saw palmetto berries is unknown.

How effective is saw palmetto?

Saw palmetto products are available in the United States, but are not labeled as a treatment for enlarged prostate. European studies have shown that an extract from the berries appears to counteract the effects of the androgens (male sex hormones) that may cause prostate enlargement. In Europe, medications based on saw palmetto are routinely prescribed for enlarged prostate.

There is little evidence to support other suggested effects. Saw palmetto may be mildly anti-

inflammatory. Breast enlargement is possible, due to the herb's anti-androgenic effect, however increased sexual vigor in males and a higher sperm count are opposites of what would be expected of an anti-androgen.

What cautions should be kept in mind when taking saw palmetto?

Tell your doctor if you choose to take saw palmetto; it could change the results of blood tests used to detect prostate cancer. Saw palmetto also can interfere with therapeutic drugs taken for an enlarged prostate.

What form and dosages of saw palmetto are recommended?

If you take saw palmetto, use a European extract prepared by a reputable herbal medicine company, and carefully follow the dosage directions. The commonly recommended dose is 320 milligrams daily of oil-based extract containing the fat-soluble components of the berries. This product is not available in the United States. Saw palmetto tea is ineffective.

Conclusion

While saw palmetto may have some value in treating an enlarged prostate gland, and is available in Europe, effective oil-based extracts are not available in this country. The forms of saw palmetto available in the United States are useless.

Sources:

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