

this product is marketed as a dietary supplement, is not required to be reviewed by the FDA for safety or efficacy.

Additional studies are needed to define when melatonin should be used, the dosage and efficacy as well as side effects.

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St. John's Wort. *The Medical Letter*, 39:1014, November 21, 1997, 107-108.

Although the author is not listed, *The Medical Letter* did an article on St. John's Wort. St. John's Wort is a herbal extract sold in health food stores and pharmacies in the U.S. It has not been evaluated by the FDA. In Germany, it is used for the treatment of depression, anxiety, and insomnia.

The ingredients are from a common flowering plant *Hypericum perforatum*. There are many active ingredients in the plant, however, hypericin is considered the active ingredient and in Germany the dosage is based on this ingredient. The amount of hypericin varies in different parts of the plant and at different times of the year.

This article discusses the pharmacology of the plant and how it inhibits the uptake of the serotonin, norepinephrine and dopamine neurotransmitters and binds to the GABA receptors. Peak action occurs in 5 hours with an oral dose and a steady state is reached in about 4 days. Metabolism and excretion are unknowns. The half life is about 25 hours.

This information was gathered from a meta-analysis of 23 randomized trials with a total of 1,757 outpatients with mild or moderate depression. No adverse effects were noted in the trials. Once again, conclusions were that longer, better studies were needed to establish effectiveness and safety of St. John's Wort. The problem in the U.S. is that active ingredients, potency and purity of products sold is unknown.

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