



All About Black cohosh:

An Introduction

"Black Cohosh - A Lady's Herb."

What is Black Cohosh ?

Family: Ranunculaceae

Genus and Species: Cimicifuga racemosa

Black cohosh is native to eastern North America, where it is found growing in shady woods in the United States and Canada. Black cohosh is a tall (9 feet high) herbaceous plant, and grows up on a stout, blackish rhizome (not radix, or true root), which are hard, cylindrical, and knotty. The white flowers of black cohosh produce unpleasant smell, and bloom on feathery racemes, which is long (up to 3 feet) and slender.

Native Americans used the rhizome of black cohosh to treat various ailments including kidney problems, sore throat, malaria, and rheumatism, and women's problems such as menstrual irregularity. Black cohosh and blue cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*) have been the favorite herbs for gynecological complaints among native Americans, just like dong quai (or dang gui; *Angelica sinensis*, a.k.a. lady's ginseng) and licorice have been favorite herbs for women in China and Korea.

History

Black cohosh and blue cohosh have been the favorite herbs for gynecological complaints among native Americans. Black cohosh was adapted and used by early settlers and medical professionals, mostly for rheumatoid ailments, and women's menstrual stress and nervous tension. As an effective herb for reducing [menopause-related symptoms](#), black cohosh is one of the biggest sellers among herbs in the US today. Black cohosh and blue cohosh are two main constituents of DreamPharms's product [Natural Wonder Woman](#).

Usage

German Commission E approved the use of black cohosh root for premenstrual discomfort and dysmenorrhea or menopausal neurovegetative ailments and discomfort, including hot flashes and vaginal dryness.

Dose: 40 mg of cut rhizome of black cohosh per day is recommended. For standardized extract (1:1, standardized to 1% 27-deoxyacteine), 8 mg per day is recommended.

Side effects: No side effect is known except occasional gastric discomfort. No interaction with other drugs is known.

Chemistry and Pharmacology

A rather complete chemical composition list of black cohosh can be found in [Dr. Duke's Phytochemical and Ethnobotanical Databases](#). Main constituents of black cohosh include oleic, palmitic, and salicylic acids; cimigonite; tannin; and volatile oil. The tetracyclic triterpenes, which are oxidized and cyclicized by ketalization, are derived from cycloartanol such as actein and cimifugoside. Commission E reported estrogen-like action, luteinizing hormone suppression, and binding to estrogen receptors. [Herbal Medicine - Expanded Commission E monographs, by Mark Blumenthal, Alicia Goldberg, and Josef Brinckmann, first edition, 2000].

Black cohosh Research:

Black cohosh contains a potent and yet mild estrogen-like substances that affects endocrine regulations by weakly, and transiently binding to estrogen receptors. The efficacy has been supported by numerous anecdotal evidences and testimonies. Some examples of modern scientific and clinical research reports and reviews on black cohosh are provided:

[J Agric Food Chem 2001 May;49\(5\):2472-9](#) - Evaluation of estrogenic activity of plant extracts for the potential treatment of menopausal symptoms

[Menopause 2002 Mar-Apr;9\(2\):145-50](#) - Estrogenic activity of herbs commonly used as remedies for menopausal symptoms

[J Steroid Biochem Mol Biol 2002 Jan;80\(1\):125-30](#) - Antiestrogenic activities of Cimicifuga racemosa extracts

[Altern Ther Health Med 2001 May-Jun;7\(3\):93-100](#) - Black cohosh: efficacy, safety, and use in clinical and preclinical applications

[Wei Sheng Yan Jiu 2001 Mar;30\(2\):77-80](#) - Estrogenicity of black cohosh (Cimicifuga racemosa) and its effect on estrogen receptor level in human breast cancer MCF-7 cells

[J Clin Oncol 2001 May 15;19\(10\):2739-45](#) - Randomized trial of black cohosh for the treatment of hot flashes among women with a history of breast cancer

[J Am Pharm Assoc \(Wash\) 2000 Mar-Apr;40\(2\):234-42; quiz 327-9](#) - Herbs of special interest to women

[J Am Med Womens Assoc 1999 Fall;54\(4\):181-3](#) - Hormone-modulating herbs: implications for women's health

[Oncol Rep 1999 Nov-Dec;6\(6\):1383-7](#) - Growth inhibition of human breast cancer cells by herbs and phytoestrogens

[J Nurse Midwifery 1999 May-Jun;44\(3\):205-16](#) - A national survey of herbal preparation use by nurse-midwives for labor stimulation. Review of the literature and recommendations for practice

[J Womens Health 1998 Jun;7\(5\):525-9](#) - A review of the effectiveness of *Cimicifuga racemosa* (black cohosh) for the symptoms of menopause

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