

# PHYTOTHERAPEUTIC TREATMENT

## IN THE CLIMACTERIC SYNDROME AND IN MINOR SYMPTOMATOLOGY OF THE MENOPAUSE

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The menopause is the time when ovarian activity comes to a halt and the woman's fertility ceases, even if in the early stages of menopause (sometimes even in the first year or two) there may very rarely be ovulatory cycles with the production of oocytes. The disappearance of oestrogens leads to a series of repercussions on the female organism which can appear with symptoms that at times appear precociously and which characterize the so-called climacteric syndrome. The average age of the menopause is around 50, with a range of normality between 45 and 53. Normally the term Menopause refers to the last physiological menstruation, related to the end of ovarian functionality. Sometimes it occurs abruptly, that is, menstruation ceases without warning, but often this is preceded by a series of alterations of the length of the cycle characterizing the so-called premenopause. In general, periods are missed and consequently there is menstruation after an interval of two or more months.

Table 1 classifies the menopause according to the period when it occurs. *The most appropriate term to indicate the phase of the*

CLASSIFIES THE MENOPAUSE  
ACCORDING TO WHEN IT OCCURS

Type of menopause	Age of occurrence
Precocious	Before on 40
Premature	40-45
Late	After 53

Tab. 1

*definitive termination of ovarian follicular activity (related to the menstrual cycles) is that of post-menopause, a very important physiological condition as it occupies about one-third of a woman's life. It follows the climacteric phase or perimenopause which refers to this period, lasting with variations between a few months and some years, characterized by great instability in the quality and quantity of the menstrual cycles, during which the various disorders typical of this phase of a woman's life begin to appear.* The so-called "climacteric syndrome" is a situation characterized by a drop in the level of hematic oestrogens. The first and most serious consequence as time passes of this deficiency is osteoporosis and cardiovascular disease.

As these can be improved with time using a conventional substitutive therapy or by administering phytoestrogens, further

discussion on these is left to other studies dedicated to such aspects. Here we will discuss symptoms of a general nature, vasomotorial, neurovegetative, vaginal and urinary symptoms that are associated with the menopause; some of these can benefit from a phytotherapeutic treatment.

Table 2 summarizes the main general symptoms of the menopause and the frequency with which they appear.

Vaginal symptoms are as follows: burning and irritation; vaginal infections; reduction in vaginal secretion; dyspareunia (painful penetration). These are the result of the trophic disorders of the external and internal genitals caused by hormone deficiency.

The urinary symptoms are:

burning;  
cystitis;  
increased stimulation to urinate; "stress incontinence".

The symptoms listed above can benefit from a substitutive therapy, but some of them may be improved by phytotherapeutic products.

It is only recently that there has been more detailed discussion on phytoestrogens in literature, whilst research has been carried out for decades on sedatives, anti-depres-

Symptom	Frequency (%)	Definition
Weight increase	60	Associated
Hot flushes:	55	These represent the most classic disorder of menopause; they affect about 80% of women and on average continue for a couple of years, but in 25% of cases they may continue for over 5 years. They appear with a sensation of intense heat which runs through the whole body like a wave, lasts from 30 seconds to 2 minutes and generally ends with a cold sweat. They are usually localized on the face, neck and in the region of the sternum. They may occur up to 15-20 times a day. The hot flushes may appear several times during the day and even at night, disturbing sleep and thus causing insomnia and palpitations linked to a temporary increased heartbeat. Hot flushes are not a phenomenon of concern, but they can be very troublesome and cause a sense of irritation in those suffering from them.
Tiredness	43	This is a symptom of variable extent and is generally influenced by pre-existing individual aspects or by concomitant socio-environmental factors.
Irritability	41	Associated with depression it may be part of the profile of this pathology, associated with insomnia. It is the consequence on the one hand of the hormonal deficiency of this period, on the other it is the expression of malaise and the value that women still attribute today to fertility and the loss of "youth".
Profuse sweating	39	Often at night and associated with vasomotorial disorders.
Headache	38	
Insomnia	32	
Depression with proneness to cry	30	
Palpitations		These are the result of a sudden increase in the heartbeat; in general they are transitory; they are often associated with hot flushes

Tab. 2

sants and antisudorifics. Before a therapeutic approach, the menopause requires a "hygienist" approach which must lead the woman to modify certain habits. Table 3 summarizes the main guidelines for behaviour to follow or modify during the menopause.

#### PHYTOTHERAPY IN THE CLIMACTERIC SYNDROME

As said earlier, the climacteric syndrome is the series of disorders which arise in premenopause and may continue for years

after the cessation of the last menstruation.

Phytotherapy offers useful remedies for: the treatment of disorders connected with mood and asthenia; anxiety; nervousness; restlessness; insomnia; the treatment of vaginal disorders; burning and irritation; vaginal infections; reduction in vaginal secretion; dyspareunia (painful penetration); the treatment of urinary troubles; urinary burning; cystitis.

Treatment of asthenia and mood disorders.

Table 4 summarizes the main

drugs suggested by some experts in the treatment of mood disorders and asthenia

#### FORMULARY

##### For asthenia

##### Tonic decoction

(Fitostudio-Natura Cremona)  
ginseng root 20g - fenugreek plant 20g - hawthorn flowers and leaves 20g - lemon balm leaves 20g - rosemary plant 20g  
5% decoction

Take one cup twice a day.

##### Anti-asthenia capsules

##### (Fitostudio-Natura Cremona)

ginseng dry extract 50g - St. John's wort dry extract 50g - ginkgo biloba dry extract 50g - excipients q.s. for one capsule

1-2 cps 2-3 times a day

##### For anxiety and insomnia

##### Compound for Lemon Balm

##### infusion (Formulario Nazionale

F. U. IX ed.)  
lemon balm leaves t.t. 15% - valerian root t.t. 25% - peppermint leaves t.t. 25% - hop aments .t. 35%

a tablespoon of the preparation in a cup of boiling water, in infusion for 10 minutes.

One-three cups during the day

##### Tranquillizing capsules

##### (Fitostudio-Natura Cremona)

kava-kava dry extract 200mg - lemon balm dry extract 100mg - excipients q.s. for one capsule

1-2 cps two-three times a day

##### Infusions for menopause disorders (Suozzi)

A) poppy 5g - orange blossom 15g - passionflower 20g

5g of the mixture in water 450g. Boil for seven minutes: leave until lukewarm.

Take half an hour before going to bed.

B) passionflower 10g - sage 30g - marjoram 10g

C) sage 20g - hawthorn 10g - mint 5g - lemon balm 5g

8g of the mixture in 500cc of water; boil for 7 minutes and take in the mornings and after lunch.

##### For depression

Infusion of St. John's wort (Capasso - Grandolini)

St. John's wort plant 2.5g - boiling water 150ml

Leave to infuse for 5 minutes; strain and drink one glass twice during the day

Syrup of St. John's wort compound (Fitostudio-Natura Cremona)

St. John's wort Fluid extract 20g - Lemon balm T.M. 20g - Ginseng Fluid extract 10g - Apple Concentrate 50g

1-2 tablespoons 3-5 times a day

Treatment of vaginitis and vulvitis

For these disorders, the most useful drugs are:

antiseptic and antimicrobial drugs mainly for local use and drugs with an anti-inflammatory power

#### HYGIENIC RULES AND BEHAVIOUR TO ADOPT IN MENOPAUSE

• pay attention to diet,
• stop smoking,
• limit consumption of alcohol,
• do physical activity
• take care of personal appearance (use beauty products and everything that helps you feel in form and at ease)
• enrich the day with pleasant and interesting activities,
• go out,
• make new friends and
• remember that you have many years ahead of you to enjoy and to fill with the things that you have always wanted to do, knowing that it is a right you have deserved and not because....

Tab. 3

#### MEDICINAL PLANTS RECOMMENDED IN THE TREATMENT OF ASTHENIA, ANXIETY, INSOMNIA AND DEPRESSION

AUTHORS	Boninfante Mascolo Mucchi	Capasso Grandolini	Braggio Chej Gamacchio	Suozzi	Weiss
Disorders					
Psycho-physical asthenia	Hawthorn Damiana Eleuterococcus Ginkgo biloba Ginseng Rosemary	Ginseng Eleuterococcus		Bitter and sweet orange Eleuterococcus Oats	
Anxiety	Hawthorn Camomile Hops Lemon balm Passion flower Lime blossom Valerian	Valerian Camomile Hops Lavender St. John's wort Passionflower	Yarrow Angelica root Orange blossom Camomile Valerian	Basil Lemon balm Passionflower Thyme Lemon verberna	Oats Bitter orange Escholtzia Kawa-kawa Hops Lemon balm Passionflower Valerian
Depression	St. John's wort	St. John's wort	Basil Caryophyllata Chinaroot Liquorice Lemon balm Rosemary Bogbean		St. John's wort Kawa-kawa Rauwolfia

Tab. 4

which act specifically on phlogosis and its manifestations.

Table 5 shows the drugs most highly recommended in literature. From the indications, there emerges a group of drugs with the activities shown above.

#### FORMULARY

##### Anti-phlogistic lavender

##### (Fitostudio Natura)

camomile fluid extract 20g - calendula fluid extract 30g - mint 5g - purified water q.s for 100g dilute four tablespoon in 200 ml of warm water

##### Anti-inflammatory cream

##### (Fitostudio - Natura)

St. John's wort fluid extract 10g - Calendula Fluid Extract 5g - Camomile Fluid Extract 5g- Cream base q.s. for 100g

Apply three times a day on the parts concerned.

This is a formulation of drugs with an appreciable anti-inflammatory and antiseptic power. It is a valid complement for basic therapies and an alternative to cortisone in minor forms.

##### Anti-mycotic lotion

##### (Fitostudio Natura)

(Essential oils.) Eugeni caryophilus - thymus vulgaris ana 2-5% - peppermint 1% - in oil of sweet almonds.

##### Local applications as necessary

This preparation aims to reduce local symptomatology, concentrating on two drugs with proven anesthetic power.

##### Decoction of alchemilla (Capasso - Grandolini)

Alchemilla vulgaris herba 100 g - water 1000 ml

Boil for five-ten minutes, strain and use for vaginal douches.

This formulation is based on an astringent drug containing tannins. "It can be of help in vulva irritation and in cases of excessive vaginal secretion".

Ointment for irritation (Douraffourd, D'Hervicourt, Lapraz)

Geranium Essential oil. 0.025g - Camomile Essential oil 0.10g - Sage Essential oil. 0.10g - transcutaneous excipient q.s. for 100g

The authors attribute anti-allergic properties to the drugs indicated

DRUGS RECOMMENDED IN INFLAMMATORY PATHOLOGIES OF THE VAGINA AND THE VULVA

	Schilcher	Capasso Grandolini	Suozzi	Wagner	Boninfante Mascolo Mucci	Douraffourd D'Hervicourt Lapraz	Belaiche
Pathology	Recommended drugs						
Erythemas and Phlogosis	Aloe vera Oats Peru Balsam Calendula Camomile  St. John's wort Pansy		St. John's wort Oak Bearberry		Birch Borage Calendula Camomile St. John's wort Horse chestnut Black-currant White willow	Yarrow Calendula Cinnamon Genlian St. John's wort Liquorice Plantain Blackcurrant Sage	Cloves Spanish oregano Savory Thyme
Leukorrhea		Alchemilla Bistort		Yarrow Alchemilla Camomile Equisetum Lavender Mallow White nettle Sage Thyme	Calendula Lemon balm Mint	Cypress Geranium Lavender Plantain Potentilla	
Herpes	Yarrow Camomile Calendula Lemon balm						
Candidasi	Myrrh						

Tab. 5

which I consider only camomile as clearly anti-inflammatory. *Oleum chamomillae* (Heinz Schilcher)  
Essential oil of camomile 1g – Oil of vaseline F.U. q.s. for 100.0g  
This simple and traditional formulation suggested in a text on phytotherapy in paediatrics is appreciable in its simplicity. Camomile is appreciated for its antiseptic and anti-phlogistic properties.  
Anti-inflammatory douche (Wagner)  
Rp. Flor. Camomillae – Fol. Salviae aa 50.0  
2-3 tablespoons in infusion in 1 litre of water

Vaginal douches (Suozzi)  
1) Thyme 10g – calendula 10g – bearberry 20g – mallow 20g  
10g of mixture in 1000 ml of water. Leave until warm, filter and use externally in bacterial vaginitis.  
2) St. John's wort 20g – eucalyptus 10g – durmast 10g – mallow 10g  
10g of the mixture in 1000 ml of water. Leave until warm, filter and use externally in bacterial vaginitis with leukorrhea.  
Treatment of infections of the urinary tract.  
These are caused by the hypertrophy and dryness of the mucous; by a reduction of immune defences.

Table 6 summarizes the plants recommended by some authors

FORMULARY

Infusion for the treatment of cystitis (Fitostudio-Natura)  
birch 5g - calendula 20g - camomile 20 g - liquorice 5g - Bearberry 20g  
(in decoction for 10 minutes)  
5g in 100 ml x 3/day  
Infusion of nettles (Capasso – Grandolini)  
Urtica dioica herba 1,5g water 150ml  
Leave in infusion for 10 minutes and drink during the day.  
Infusion of bearberry

(Capasso – Grandolini)  
*Arctostaphylos uva ursi folium* 2.5g – water 150ml  
Filter after 15 minutes, strain and drink during the day. Alkalify the urine beforehand. Do not take for long periods.  
Infusion of bucco (Capasso – Grandolini)  
*Barosma betulina folium* 5g – water 500ml. Leave in infusion for 10 minutes and drink 2-3 times during the day.  
Infusion for the treatment of cystitis (Braggio – Chiej-Gamacchio)  
Aaron's rod 15g – Birch leaves 10g – Maize stigma 10g – cherry stalks 15g  
3 tablespoons of the mixture in 500g of boiling water. Strain after one hour. Drink three table-spoons a day.

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TABLE 6 DRUGS RECOMMENDED IN PATHOLOGIES OF THE URINARY TRACT

Capasso Grandolini	Suozzi	Braggio Chiej Gamacchio	Boninfante Mascolo Mucci	Douraffourd D'Hervicourt Lapraz
Burdock	St. John's wort	Oat straw	Birch	Birch
Birch	Oak	Birch	Camomile	Cajeput
Bucco	Bearberry	Cherry	Horsechestnut	Cinnamon
Equisetum		Cynorrhodon	Pilosella	Cypress
Juniper		Equisetum	Black currant	Cloves
Couchgrass		Bean	White willow	Fennel
Maize		Couchgrass	Bearberry	Juniper
Bilberry		Juniper		Real lavender
Nettle		St. John's wort		Lovage
Bearberry		Maize		Rosemary
		Nettle		Thyme
		Parietaria		
		Poplar		
		Pear		
		Parsley		
		Sloe		
		Rosemary		
		Elder		
		Bearberry		
		Aaron's rod		

Tab. 6