

# HERBCLIP

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FILE: · Prostate  
· Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH)  
· Saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*)  
· Pumpkin seed (*Cucurbita pepo*)  
· Nettle root (*Urtica dioica*)  
· Pygeum (*Pygeum africanum*; *Prunus africanus*)

DATE: November 19, 1997

HC 102871

RE: **Review of Herbs that Treat Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia (BPH)**

Marandola, P., Jallous, H., Bombardelli, E, Morazzoni, P. 1997. Main phytoderivatives in the management of benign prostatic hyperplasia. *Fitoterapia*, Vol. 68, No. 3, pp. 195-204.

This recent review focused on the use of phytotherapy for the treatment of benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), a slow, progressive enlargement of the prostate gland. BPH occurs in more than half of men over fifty and its frequency increases with age. Though the causes of BPH are not known, it's believed that shifting levels of androgens, androgen metabolites and estrogens may play important roles. Cholesterol may also be important, as cholesterol and some of its metabolites are at higher-than-normal levels in hyperplastic prostate tissue.

Plant extracts used in the treatment of BPH contain compounds that have antiandrogen and antiestrogen activity, antiinflammatory effects and cholesterol-lowering action. Of the plant extracts used for treating BPH, three reviewed here have had positive monographs published by Commission E of the German Federal Health Office, concerning the treatment of BPH:

The fruit extract of saw palmetto (*Serenoa repens*) has been found in pharmacological studies and several clinical trials to relieve the majority of BPH symptoms and, at the proper dosage, is actually superior to the prescription drug finasteride (Proscar®). It has not been found, however, to lower PSA (prostate specific antigen), reduce the size of the prostate or improve sexual function.

Pumpkin (*Cucurbita pepo*) seed extract is included as one of the active ingredients in some drugs used widely in Germany for the treatment of urological symptoms associated with BPH. In one double-blind, placebo-controlled study, *C. pepo* and *S. repens* extracts given together in the

preparation *Curbicin*, improved the condition of patients with mild symptoms of urological obstruction associated with BPH. It is approved by Commission E.

Nettle root (*Urtica dioica*) was introduced as therapy for BPH in the 1980's, when chemical studies revealed the presence of pharmacologically active substances known to be effective in the treatment of BPH. Its effectiveness has been studied in open, multicenter studies and in two double-blind, placebo-controlled trials. It is also approved by Commission E.

The fourth, though not the subject of a Commission E monograph on the treatment of BPH, is also thought to be effective. *Pygeum africanum* (syn. *Prunus africanum*) bark extract has been used in the symptomatic treatment of mild and moderate BPH in Europe since 1969. Its efficacy has been investigated in open and double-blind clinical trials with thousands of subjects suffering from BPH. It appears to be well tolerated and often superior to placebo. —*Densie Webb, PhD*

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