

A systematic review of herbal medicines effective on postpartum depression

Zahra Barati

Department of Nursing & Midwifery
Ahvaz Branch, Islamic Azad University
Ahvaz, Iran

1. Introduction:

Postpartum depression (PPD) is a leading mental health disorder among millions of new mothers worldwide. The syndrome itself entails symptoms such as poor mood, anxiety, and pervasive fatigue in general. The condition impacts negatively on the maternal bond and general well-being for both mother and child. Conventional treatments for PPD primarily consist of pharmacotherapy and psychotherapy. However, a great many women seek alternatives or complements to treatment because of concerns regarding medication side effects and stigma associated with mental health.

This review will systematically assess these herbs, their effectiveness, and their role in the framework of comprehensive treatment.

2. Search Strategy:

A thorough targeted search was conducted on scientific websites, including PubMed, Cochrane Library, Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, Embase, using keywords related to the topics of interest: postpartum depression and herbal therapies. Articles were identified from 2010 to 2024 that were relevant to this topic; out of these, 32 were considered relevant, and 12 articles were selected for further consideration.

3. Results:

Our literature search showed that the following herbs may act effectively on postpartum depression through mechanisms to be highlighted:

St. John's wort enhances serotonin activity, promoting neurotransmitter function.

Ashwagandha reduces stress and anxiety, showing significant mood improvements in postpartum women after eight weeks of use.

Saffron, particularly its compound crocin, boosts serotonergic activity, contributing to its antidepressant effects.

Chamomile is linked to reduced anxiety and depression, with postpartum women reporting better sleep and lower depression scores after taking it.

Ginseng exhibits adaptogenic and neuroprotective benefits, with some studies indicating it helps lower depression and improve energy levels in postpartum women.

4. Conclusion and Discussion:

Medicinal plants are a potentially valuable resource for the management of postpartum depression and serve as adjunctive therapies to conventional therapies.

5. References

1. Nguyen, Huong Thi Thanh et al. "The symptoms of postpartum depression observed by family members: A pilot study." *Frontiers in psychiatry* vol. 13 897175. 13 Oct. 2022, doi:10.3389/fpsyt.2022.897175
2. Kassa, Getachew et al. "Prevalence and determinants of postpartum depression among adolescent and adult mothers in Northwest Ethiopia." *Research in nursing & health* vol. 47,2 (2024): 125-140. doi:10.1002/nur.22362
3. Kholghi, Gita et al. "St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) and depression: what happens to the neurotransmitter systems?." *Naunyn-Schmiedeberg's archives of pharmacology* vol. 395,6 (2022): 629-642. doi:10.1007/s00210-022-02229-z

4. Cui, Yong-Hua, and Yi Zheng. "A meta-analysis on the efficacy and safety of St John's wort extract in depression therapy in comparison with selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors in adults." *Neuropsychiatric disease and treatment* vol. 12 1715-23. 11 Jul. 2016, doi:10.2147/NDT.S106752
5. Salve, Jaysing et al. "Adaptogenic and Anxiolytic Effects of Ashwagandha Root Extract in Healthy Adults: A Double-blind, Randomized, Placebo-controlled Clinical Study." *Cureus* vol. 11,12 e6466. 25 Dec. 2019, doi:10.7759/cureus.6466
6. Nakić Radoš, Sandra et al. "Anxiety During Pregnancy and Postpartum: Course, Predictors and Comorbidity with Postpartum Depression." *Acta clinica Croatica* vol. 57,1 (2018): 39-51. doi:10.20471/acc.2017.56.04.05
7. Ceremuga, Tomás E et al. "Investigation of the Anxiolytic and Antidepressant Effects of Crocin, a Compound from Saffron (*Crocus sativus* L), in the Male Sprague-Dawley Rat." *AANA journal* vol. 86,3 (2018): 225-233.
8. Chang, Shao-Min, and Chung-Hey Chen. "Effects of an intervention with drinking chamomile tea on sleep quality and depression in sleep disturbed postnatal women: a randomized controlled trial." *Journal of advanced nursing* vol. 72,2 (2016): 306-15. doi:10.1111/jan.12836
9. Okun, Michele L et al. "Poor sleep quality increases symptoms of depression and anxiety in postpartum women." *Journal of behavioral medicine* vol. 41,5 (2018): 703-710. doi:10.1007/s10865-018-9950-7
10. Dol, Justine et al. "Influence of parity and infant age on maternal self-efficacy, social support, postpartum anxiety, and postpartum depression in the first six months in the Maritime Provinces, Canada." *Birth (Berkeley, Calif.)* vol. 48,3 (2021): 438-447. doi:10.1111/birt.12553
11. Yang, Xiao et al. "Maternal postnatal confinement practices and postpartum depression in Chinese populations: A systematic review." *PloS one* vol. 18,10 e0293667. 30 Oct. 2023, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0293667
12. K, Latha et al. "Study on awareness and management based health action using video intervention (SAMBHAV) for postpartum depression among mothers attending immunisation clinic in a tertiary medical college hospital: Study protocol." *PloS one* vol. 19,4 e0301357. 3 Apr. 2024, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0301357

Keywords:

postpartum depression, depression, medicinal herbs, herbal therapy, plant medicines.