Mood Food

An herbal food combination for emotional health — lifting the mood, easing the anxiety that rides along with it, and feeding and clearing the body the mind lives in.

This Herbal Combination



Saint John's Wort — the lead herb, long used for mild to moderate depression. Its active components, hyperforin and hypericin, help keep more of the brain's own mood chemicals (serotonin, dopamine and norepinephrine) active.



Kava Kava — eases situational anxiety and muscle tension and promotes relaxation without dulling the mind. Unlike many calming herbs that cause heavy sedation, it settles stress while letting you stay alert.



Uva Ursi Leaves — supports the kidneys as a primary elimination organ. A mild diuretic and renal flush, it helps the body clear waste and ease bloating and water retention.



Hawthorn Berries — improve blood flow and oxygen delivery to the heart and the rest of the body, the brain included, and gently relax the blood vessels.



Yellow Dock — supports the liver and gets the bowels moving as a mild laxative and digestive stimulant, so waste leaves the body instead of circulating back through it. It also helps the body absorb iron.



Kelp — an exceptionally rich natural source of iodine, the raw material the thyroid needs. A thyroid running low brings on the fatigue, apathy and brain fog that so often mimic depression.

How It Works

Low mood is rarely just in the mind. A brain that isn't getting enough blood flow, a thyroid running low, a liver and bowel holding onto waste, a body worn out from a long stretch of stress: any one of these can leave a person flat, foggy and discouraged. This formula works on all of them at once:

Supports natural brain detoxification through the elimination organs.

Supports the brain's own mood chemicals — serotonin, dopamine and norepinephrine.

Provides circulatory and metabolic fuel, bringing blood and oxygen to the brain.

Supports the thyroid, preventing the fatigue and apathy that often mimic depressive symptoms.

Suggested Use

For serious issues: 1 tablespoon twice a day.

Always take Echinacea at this level. The work these herbs do in the brain creates die-off, and Echinacea supports the body through it, so there's no backlash from the higher dose.

From my own experience, this dose has been very useful during times of emotional crisis.

After a Panic Attack

Fight or flight, the panic loop: when a severe panic attack strikes, the body goes through an intense sympathetic nervous system storm.

The immediate intercept (NFX Formula): NFX relies on fast-acting nerve herbs such as Valerian, Passionflower and Skullcap. They act as a physical brake, bringing the heart rate down, easing hyperventilation and breaking the fight-or-flight loop.

The emotional consolidation (Mood Food): once the panic is broken, the body is left exhausted and depleted. Kava keeps leftover anxiety from building back up by soothing the GABA receptors, Hawthorn restores smooth blood flow and oxygen to a worn-out cardiovascular system, and St. John's Wort gently raises the brain's mood chemicals to lift you out of the post-panic "emotional hangover."

Separate the doses: take NFX first, then wait 15 to 20 minutes for the physical symptoms to settle before taking Mood Food. This keeps from overwhelming the stomach with too many concentrated extracts at once.

The 48 to 72-hour recovery window: keep taking Mood Food steadily for two to three days afterward, even after the panic has passed. That gives the nervous system a cushion to rebuild its reserves and prevents rebound anxiety.

Why Echinacea Helps

I've long called the reaction some people feel when starting the higher dose "die-off," and Echinacea clears it. The clinical explanation is a little different. In medicine, a true die-off (Herxheimer) reaction happens when large numbers of bacteria, fungi or parasites are killed and release toxins. With St. John's Wort, the flu-like malaise, fatigue, headache or nausea some people feel is driven by two other things:

The neurotransmitter adjustment: St. John's Wort keeps more serotonin, dopamine and norepinephrine active. As the nervous system adjusts to that shift, it can bring on a temporary period of fatigue, brain fog and headache that feels like an illness.

Gut irritation: its active compounds, hyperforin and hypericin, can irritate the gut lining, and because so much of the immune system lives in the digestive tract, that irritation can be felt as a general toxic or "hangover" feeling.

Either way, the body answers with inflammatory messengers called cytokines. Echinacea is a strong immune balancer and anti-inflammatory; it calms those cytokines, soothing the inflammation and clearing the headache, fatigue and malaise.

This information is provided for educational purposes as part of traditional herbal practice and is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. Always consult a qualified healthcare provider regarding any health condition.

For more on this formula, see my blog post "Food for a Low Mood" at www.daradietz.me.