

## BHMA Advice on Choosing a Herbal Medicinal Product

The UK is fortunate in having in place a robust regulatory framework for herbal medicines, introduced more than 10 years ago under a European Directive. The regulations ensure that herbal medicines containing herbs such as St John's Wort, Echinacea and Valerian, are manufactured to the highest pharmaceutical standards and the products are accompanied by reliable and comprehensive patient information, approved by the Medicines & Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), which ensure that the products are taken appropriately and safely. These highly regulated herbal products are known collectively as THR herbal medicines and can be identified by a THR logo on the outer carton and the patient information leaflet.

As with all medicines whether pharmaceutical or herbal, patients should always seek the advice of a healthcare practitioner, if they are taking other medicines. This is clearly stated within the in-pack leaflet (known as the THR leaflet) which is contained in all over-the-counter THR herbal medicines. The THR leaflet also gives reliable information on any known drug interactions and side-effects.

The THR leaflet is approved by the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) having assessed worldwide evidence including relevant, robust research papers to establish safety, quality, and any herb / drug interactions and contraindication issues.

### Four Steps to Choosing a Traditional Herbal Medicine

- STEP 1**                    **ALWAYS LOOK FOR THE 'THR' LOGO?**
- STEP 2**                    **ALWAYS READ THE IN-PACK LEAFLETS**
- STEP 3**                    **CONSULT RELIABLE ONLINE RESOURCES**
- STEP 4**                    **IF IN DOUBT, CONSULT YOUR DOCTOR**



#### **STEP ONE – ALWAYS LOOK FOR THE THR LOGO**

The independent government body, the MHRA, regulates both pharmaceutical and herbal medicines. Herbal medicines that are approved for sale in the UK by the MHRA have been assessed by them for safety and quality, and display the 'THR' logo on their packs.



#### **STEP TWO - ALWAYS READ THE IN-PACK LEAFLETS**

Both THR herbal medicines and pharmaceutical medicines contain an information leaflet, approved by the MHRA, that contains clear and reliable information on its medicinal use together with any warnings of drug interactions, possible side-effects and other useful information. Consumers should always read the in-pack leaflet of both THR herbal medicine and prescribed medicines to check for herb / drug interactions.

#### **STEP THREE – CONSULT RELIABLE ONLINE SOURCES**

Anyone interested in taking an herbal medicine can also view a consumer-friendly version of drug and herbal medicine leaflets by visiting the MHRA SPC-Patient Information Leaflet Finder. Simply type in the name of your herbal medicine, prescribed medicine, or active ingredient (e.g. ibuprofen, echinacea):

<http://www.mhra.gov.uk/spc-pil/index.htm>

#### **STEP FOUR – IF IN DOUBT, CONSULT YOUR DOCTOR**

If in any doubt, consult a doctor who will have access to all medicine and herbal medicine leaflets and can advise on their use.