

[Healthcare & Pharma](#)

April 18, 2008 9:31

Saffron may ease PMS symptoms

By Reuters Health

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - Saffron, a spice known for flavoring Mediterranean cuisine, might also offer an antidote to premenstrual syndrome, a small study suggests.

Saffron, the world's most expensive spice, has a long history of non-culinary uses. Traditionally, the spice has been advocated for stomach pain, digestive problems and even depression -- with some recent clinical trials suggesting that saffron may in fact aid mild depression.

It's thought that the spice might influence depression symptoms via effects on the brain chemical serotonin. Because alterations in serotonin activity are suspected in PMS, a team of Iranian researchers decided to study whether saffron supplements might help relieve these symptoms.

Dr. M. Agha-Hosseini and colleagues at Tehran University of Medical Sciences randomly assigned 50 women to take either saffron capsules or a placebo twice a day over two menstrual cycles. The women, who ranged in age from 20 to 45, had all had PMS symptoms such as cramps, bloating, irritability and fatigue for at least six months.

At the end of the treatment period, three-quarters of the women on saffron capsules reported at least a 50 percent reduction in their PMS symptoms. That compared with only 8 percent of women in the placebo group, the researchers report in the medical journal BJOG.

In addition, the researchers found, 60 percent of the saffron group showed a 50 percent improvement in depression symptoms, versus one woman in the placebo group.

The findings, according to the researchers, support the idea that saffron may affect serotonin activity -- and help alleviate not only depression symptoms, but PMS as well.

However, they write, this study is the first they know of to test saffron for treating PMS. Larger, longer-term studies are needed to confirm the findings, the researchers conclude.

SOURCE: BJOG, March 2008.

Our Standards: [The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles.](#)

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-saffron-pms-idUSCOL86301620080418>