

Spotting “Sham” Palmetto To Save Your Prostate Health

Benefitting from the natural power of the Saw Palmetto berry requires knowing how to avoid fraudulent sham versions

By Stephen Hill, MS, Vice President, Valensa International

Can two products, both labeled to contain Saw Palmetto, vary so widely that one could be extremely effective at helping men's prostate-related urinary health, and the other provide zero benefit?

The answer is absolutely “YES.”

By the age of 50, most estimates show one out of every two men will struggle with mild-to-moderate prostate-related symptoms. Like gray hair or wrinkles, the prostate shows signs of aging when unpleasant urinary issues come up. For men in this category, this article should provide a lot of relief because studies show taking 320 mg of pure Saw Palmetto Extract (SPE) is a natural, safe and effective first line of defense for urinary and prostate health¹. This is the reason Saw Palmetto continues to be one of the top 20 best-selling herbal dietary products in the USA². In Europe, Saw Palmetto extract is often prescribed as a pharmaceutical for prostate problems.

However, not all products labeled and claimed to contain Saw Palmetto are alike.

Saw Palmetto extract comes from unique berries of a wild, indigenous small palm, *Serenoa Repens*, that grows exclusively in the Southeast United States, predominantly in Florida. It was introduced to settlers by Native Americans who used the berries for centuries to treat a host of health conditions. When ripe, the berries turn red, and produce an oil that can be extracted solvent-free. This extract is why many call the berry a “Florida Treasure.”

Sham Palmetto

However, prior to ripening, Saw Palmetto berries are green and do not contain the valued oil. Many of the products on the market contain ground green berries which do not provide clinically-proven levels that benefit the prostate. And many brands that claim to contain Saw Palmetto extract have diluted and adulterated their products with cheap vegetable oils that have no benefit either. In fact, one study conducted in 2017 by Valensa International, evaluated six brands, finding four of six extracts appeared to be adulterated (engineered) and the remaining two appeared to be outright imitation³.

Some harvesters don't realize the impact selling green berries has on the market; from the land owners, farmers, retailers, manufacturers who extract the oil for other nutraceutical companies and eventually to the consumer, who is desperate for relief. The ground berry powder sold in

¹Carraro J, Raynaud J, Koch G *et al.* Comparison of phytotherapy (Permixon®) with finasteride in the treatment of benign prostate hyperplasia: a randomized international study of 1,098 patients. *Prostate* 1996;29(4):231–40.

² Source: SPINS/IRI (52 weeks ending January 1, 2017)

³Saw Palmetto Adulteration Found, July 2017, Valensa International

capsules which contain a slight fraction of efficacious oil and adulterated Saw Palmetto oils both compromise the health of a consumer leaning on Saw Palmetto products to improve prostate health and reclaim quality of life.

“We have been watching this latest development, and will be updating our bulletin because more ingredients masquerading as Saw Palmetto have surfaced on the market,” said Mark Blumenthal, founder and executive director of American Botanical Council (ABC) and founder and director of the Botanical Adulterants Program. “We have heard concerns for many years from ethical, responsible members of industry creating unfair competition in the marketplace.”

Dr. Stefan Gafner, Chief Science Officer for ABC, said that demand for Saw Palmetto may be outpacing the supply, which brings inherent risks.

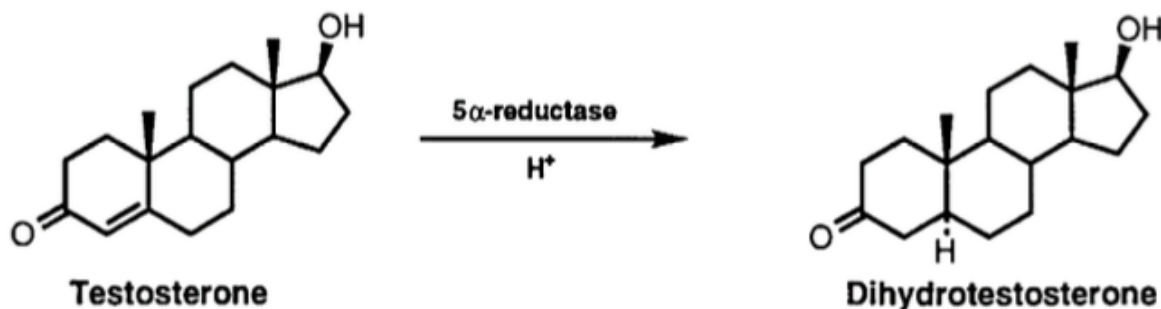
“When the Saw Palmetto berry harvest volume is below expectations, and combined the increase in demand and rising prices, it is not surprising that some of the Saw Palmetto material on the market is not authentic,” Dr. Gafner said. “Suppliers that sell high quality Saw Palmetto extracts will not be able to compete on price, and may lose lucrative contracts to the providers of low-cost adulterated “Saw Palmetto” materials. Finally, there is also a risk to the reputation of the dietary supplement industry, and the Saw Palmetto industry in particular, since potential negative headlines in the media may erode consumer confidence in the industry in general and the Saw Palmetto products in particular.”

How to Spot “Fake” Saw Palmetto

- *Imported Versions.* Saw Palmetto imported from China, for example, is a red flag because Saw Palmetto is native to Florida. Look for U.S.A. origination and/or “Fresh from Florida.”
- *Know the Difference.* Saw Palmetto capsules containing berry powders (not extracts) **do not** have the concentration or dosage power to do any good. Buy pure Saw Palmetto Oil Extract that Meets US Pharmacopeia (USP) Monograph.
- *Look for Price* — If the price seems too good to be true, then it's not authentic. The crops are seasonal and can be affected by weather, so pricing can vary.
- *Require 320 mg of Full Potency Saw Palmetto Extract in Capsules or Gel caps* — The Saw Palmetto Extract should also meet the USP monograph and be unadulterated with other oils.
- *Look and Ask for Details, Even in Trusted Brands* —Knowing these basic guidelines gives integrative medicine practitioners, and consumers, a big advantage that benefits the prostate and your pocketbook.

How Saw Palmetto Works

The suggested mechanism of Saw Palmetto Extract (SPE) action is a mild inhibition of the activity of 5 α -reductase, the enzyme which catalyzes conversion of testosterone into dihydrotestosterone (DHT).



DHT, in its turn, is linked to the development of BPH. In other words, inhibition of 5α-reductase activity results in lesser DHT synthesized in the body from testosterone, and therefore, reduced chances of BPH development. It is shown **in vivo** that the anti-BPH property of Saw Palmetto Extract is comparable with the commonly used synthetic 5α-reductase inhibitor, Finasteride. In addition, the efficacy of SPE is decisively confirmed by a rather high amount of evidences and clinical trials.

Vying For Transparency

Valensa pioneered bringing Saw Palmetto Extract to market through distributors and other companies. Therefore, Valensa is not visible on any consumer-branded label found on the shelf. However, you can look for USPlus® Saw Palmetto extract, which features a patented solvent free, Deep Extract® High Pressure CO2 extraction.

Every lot of Saw Palmetto Extract is tested to confirm compliance with current USP and European Union requirements. However, Valensa adds stricter standards developed, applying unique analytical approaches to verify product quality and authenticity.

In order to confirm its high efficacy, USPlus® was recently tested **in vitro** for its 5α-reductase inhibition activity. Testing was done in the College of Pharmacy of the Chung-Ang University, Seoul, Korea last year.

As a result of comparative tests, it is now experimentally confirmed that USPlus® brand Saw Palmetto Extract has noticeably greater 5α-reductase activity inhibition effect than two other competing brands, and most importantly, USPlus® shows powerful inhibition effect.

Fighting Sham Palmetto

Fighting sham palmetto requires a strategy to reach throughout the supply-chain, from farm to pill. For example, the industry must learn that green berry powder does not help prostate. This includes the land owners, growers, harvesters, nutraceutical businesses and consumers. Valensa is taking steps to educate the entire supply-chain, and recently received the "Fresh From Florida" status for its Saw Palmetto Extract.

Saw Palmetto is a precious, natural resource which needs to be handled correctly. Sham versions sabotage the market only benefitting the profiteers who care more about making a quick buck than the industry in whole. Through education, and with articles like these, Saw Palmetto Extract can continue to serve men's health.

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About the Author

Stephen Hill is the Vice President of Quality and Product Development at Valensa International. He brings 17 years experience in dietary supplements, specializing in Saw Palmetto. Steve earned both his Bachelors and Masters in Science degrees from the University of Florida. Contact him at: moreinfo@valensa.com.

Please note: These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration.

This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.