

# Ashwagandha, Stress and Anxiety Herb

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Herbs have various salutary effects for promoting health and well being. Such herbs are called "tonics" for its ability to strengthen, tone and regulate.

There are many such special tonic herbs used in Oriental medicine that build energy, increase adaptability, strengthen immunity and help retard the aging process. India also has venerable ancient tradition of herbal medicine and natural healing called Ayurveda, "science of life." Ayurveda contains many wonder herbs.

Of the ayurvedic energy tonics none is as important as a subtropical bush called Ashwagandha, whose root possesses a broad range of important healing powers rare in the plant kingdom. It belongs to the nightshade family like the common garden tomato. It is easy to grow in warm climates and there is no need for expenses in producing it.

Ashwagandha, *Withania somnifera*, which means "the smell of a horse," is an important tonic, energy builder and rejuvenating herb used in ayurvedic medicine. It is famous for imparting to its users the vigor and vitality of a fast running stallion.

Its qualities have been proven through centuries and even millennia of experience. Ashwagandha is commonly used in many ayurvedic formulas as well as by itself for health enhancement and for the treatment of disease. The herb strengthens the deeper tissues of the body - muscle, bone, nerve and reproductive - including the connective tissue.

Ashwagandha increases quality body weight by building high quality tissues, particularly muscle. It is also useful in wasting diseases and debilitated conditions such as poor growth in children and poor vitality in the elderly. Ashwagandha is good for restoring energy in convalescence from disease or for people who

have chronic low energy. Plus, it is an excellent herb for chronic fatigue syndrome.

Without unduly stimulating the sex drive, ashwagandha increases sexual energy. It is used primarily for male conditions like impotence, sterility and premature ejaculation. Modern studies in India show that it actually works to increase the sperm count. But it is also used for women and treats female sterility and infertility.

As an energy tonic ashwagandha occupies a place in ayurvedic medicine similar to the role of ginseng in traditional Chinese medicine. Ashwagandha has many of the same properties that ginseng is famous for and is less expensive. However, ashwagandha has no botanical relationship with ginseng and should not be confused with ginseng as a plant.

In some respects, ashwagandha may be better than ginseng. Ashwagandha is used as a primary sex tonic in ayurvedic medicine, while ginseng is not so used in traditional Chinese medicine because ginseng is thought to work more on the digestive than the reproductive system. Ginseng is a stimulant that may cause insomnia, if overused. However, ashwagandha tends to calm the entire system.

India has long been a land where vegetarianism has predominated. Ashwagandha is regarded as an ideal energy tonic for vegetarians, providing the stamina that people often associate with meat. For vegetarians suffering from low energy or fatigue, it is an herb to consider taking.

Allopathic doctors in India often prescribe ashwagandha along with antibiotics to help counter the tendency of these drugs to weaken the immune system. Ashwagandha strengthens the immune system and counters chronic fevers and infections. It aids in the healing process, particularly of chronic, slow healing sores. It can

help counter the effects of too many antibiotics. With such properties, ashwagandha is useful for conditions like Epstein Barr virus and A.I.D.S.

In the United States ashwagandha is mainly used for weakness of debility conditions, or for people who work so hard they need additional energy. It is not for acute disease, particularly those involving high fever. Therefore, ashwagandha should generally not be used during colds, flu or acute fevers.

Traditionally, ashwagandha is taken in a powder form. A level teaspoon of the powder of the herb can be boiled in a cup of milk for ten minutes over a low flame and then taken with a teaspoon of a natural sugar (like honey) and a quarter-teaspoon of a spice like cinnamon or ginger. A half-teaspoon of clarified butter (ghee) can be added to enhance the herb's effect. It can be taken morning and evening for a period of one to three months.

The entire herb can also be purchased. However, the herb does taste bitter. For those who don't like the taste, tablets, capsules and extracts of ashwagandha are convenient to use and are available in health food stores.

The general amount of the herb used is one to three grams twice a day for a period of one to

three months, generally in the late fall and early winter when our vitality is at its natural low point. With so many important uses, why is ashwagandha not used more in America today? Lack of knowledge and availability are the main reasons. However, with such important properties ashwagandha is likely to become one of the most important herbs this decade, particularly as modern medicine comes to recognize the need for energy tonics and immune system boosters.

**Caution:** *Ashwagandha (Mellow Mind) is not recommended with antidepressant or SSRI medications.*

**Note:** *Ashwagandha (Mellow Mind) may act as an aphrodisiac.*

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