Korean Red Ginseng Helps Men with Erection Problems in Clinical Study


The ancient herbal remedy Asian ginseng (Panax ginseng C.A. Meyer, Araliaceae) has shown that it may be able to live up to its traditional reputation as an aphrodisiac for older men. In a recent clinical trial, Asian ginseng (Korean red ginseng) was shown to be safe and effective to assist men with erection problems.

The trial consisted of 45 men with clinically diagnosed erectile dysfunction. They ingested capsules containing the powdered roots of ginseng (900 mg) or a placebo three times per day. In a double-blind, placebo-controlled, crossover study design, the men were divided into two groups. The first group took ginseng for eight weeks; the second group the placebo pill. Then, after a two-week "washout period" in which the effects of the ginseng subsided, the groups crossed over; the first group took a placebo and the second group took the ginseng.

The study concluded that the men, who averaged 54 years of age, significantly increased their total sexual function by 36 percent (from a baseline score of 28-38 for the ginseng group), compared to a 10.4 percent increase for the placebo group (baseline score of 28-31). The erection scores increased by a rate of 42 percent for the ginseng group compared to 16 percent for the placebo group. The study was conducted at the University of Ulsan College of Medicine's Asan Medical Center in Seoul, Korea.

Other test measurements concluded that there was a significant increase in the rigidity of the tip of the penis in the ginseng users compared to those on placebo. There was no significant change in levels of testosterone, the primary male hormone, in either group, suggesting that ginseng does not alter male hormone levels.

Systemic Review of Tea and Cardiovascular Disease


Tea (Camellia sinensis (L.) Kuntze, Theaceae) is a very popular beverage in many countries. It is ranked the second most common drink worldwide, after water. Because it is consumed so frequently, even small beneficial health effects of tea could have a major influence on public health. Some studies have suggested that the flavonoids in tea (e.g., catechin, epicatechin, epigallocatechin gallate) may reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD). Many flavonoids have antioxidant properties that have been found to prevent oxidation of low-density lipoproteins (LDL cholesterol) in vitro and in vivo. However, the research evidence collected to date has not conclusively shown that tea consumption affects CVD risk.

The authors performed a meta-analysis to investigate the potential effect of tea consumption on CVD risk. Using MEDLINE, the authors located all relevant epidemiological and observational studies published between 1966 and 2000. They defined CVD as including coronary heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, stroke, myocardial infarction (heart attack), and ischemic heart disease. After some studies were excluded, the authors selected a total of 10 cohort studies and seven case-control studies for the meta-analysis.

Statistical analyses were performed to compute a comparable estimate of relative risk from each study, to analyze variations between studies, and to compute summary effect estimates when possible. Some studies reported tea consumption as a continuous variable, whereas others reported it as a categorical variable. The authors attempted to make the studies comparable by estimating the relative risk associated with an increase in tea consumption of three cups/day (i.e., from 0 to 3 cups).

In summarizing the results of the meta-analysis, the authors write, "Most studies suggested a decrease in the rate of CVD outcomes with increasing tea consumption." More specifically, nine of 13 studies showed decreased risk (1-75 percent decrease) of myocardial infarction or coronary heart disease with a three-cup/day increase in tea consumption. The other four of these 13 studies found an increased risk (4-126 percent increase) of myocardial infarction or coronary heart disease with a three-cup/day increase in tea intake. For stroke, a three-cup/day increase in tea intake was associated with a 26-66 percent decrease in risk in five of six studies. The sixth study found a 51 percent increase in stroke.
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