

Ashwaganda (*Withania somnifera*)

Common Names: Indian Ginseng and withania.

Location: This herb grows in parts of Sri Lanka, Pakistan and India.

Description: This herb is found in the family of tomatoes and grows as a small shrub. It produces yellow flowers

and red fruit. The entire herb is used medicinally.

Properties: According to the Prescription For Herbal Healing Handbook (2002), "Ashwaganda has been used for

more than 2,500 years as a 'vitalizer.'" This herb works on the entire nervous system and relieves stress, exhaustion, fatigue and memory loss.

Uses: Ashwaganda can be used for athletes to give them instant energy without the use of harmful stimulants.

Also it can be used to fight Alzheimer's disease, arthritis, autoimmune disorders, carpal tunnel syndrome, and cancer.

Doses: This herb is available in capsule form.

Warnings: Do not eat the berries of this plant. Try not to take this herb with tranquilizers because it will cause drowsiness and loss of coordination. Also, do not take this herb if you are taking prescription drugs for insomnia, anxiety, or seizures.

Also known as

Withania somnifera, *Indian Ginseng*, *Avarada*, and *Withania*.

Introduction

Ashwagandha is a member of the nightshade family, however it should be noted that that unlike other Nightshades, Ashwagandha lacks the poisonous attributes. Typically found and cultivated in India, Ashwagandha has been popularly applied to those with overworked and often hyper-tense lives.

Ashwagandha is India's native answer to Ginseng and it is currently being applied in Ayurvedic medicine to treat hypertension and stress related ailments. Recent studies have attempted to popularize its use as a preliminary treatment for male infertility and impotence problems.

Constituents

Mainly consisting of withanolides, glycosides and several different alkaloids.

Parts Used

Eastern and Western herbal medicine use the dried root. Most notably, the dry, cut root. Berries of this plant are mildly toxic to the stomach and gastrointestinal tract. No major studies have released the benefits of the leaf.

Typical Preparations

Tea decoction from the root, liquid herbal extract, herbal capsules (non-standardized) Dried crushed or powdered roots can be applied to food or directly consumed.

Summary

Not much research has been carried out for this particular botanical and to date there have not been any released notes on possible medicinal contraindications, side effects or potential health hazards. This particular root has been used successfully for the last 3,000 years and the empirical evidence of the ages speaks for itself. It comes highly recommended in times of severe strife and stress-induced discomfort. However Ashwagandha should not be consumed for long periods of time and is better reserved for the "times of need".

Precautions

Botanical safety guidelines in the US and Germany have suggested that Ashwagandha may be a mild abortifacient and it is not recommended for pregnant women.