

From our friends at "Back to Herbs"



Korean Ginseng (Panax ginseng)

The word panax is derived from the Greek word panacea, which means all healing. In China, ginseng is the most used herb, where it has been used for more than 7000 years and in China, the Korean ginseng roots are called Jin-chen, meaning "like a man" as they resemble the same shape as the human body. The ginseng plant can live for over 100 years. Today, approximately 6 million Americans use it regularly.



Herbal remedies known as "ginseng" are based on the roots of several distinct species of plants, mainly Korean or Asian ginseng (*Panax ginseng*), Siberian ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*), and American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*). All of these species are in the Araliaceae plant family, but each has its own specific effects on the body. Do not confuse *Panax ginseng* with American ginseng, Siberian ginseng, or *Panax pseudoginseng*. Each functions differently in the body.

Many people who take ginseng find this herb to be a good overall energizer and one that improves cognitive function. Ginsenosides are steroid-like phytochemicals giving ginseng properties to counter the effects of stress. The glycosides act on the adrenal glands, helping to prevent adrenal hypertrophy and excess corticosteroid production in response to stress. Ginsenosides increase protein synthesis and activity of neurotransmitters in the brain. Ginseng stimulates the formation of blood vessel and improves blood circulation in the brains, thereby improving memory and cognitive abilities. Ginseng is also used for diabetes, migraine, infections, radiation and chemotherapy protection, to aid in sleep, and to stimulate the appetite.

Korean ginseng contains steroids such as panaxtriol. The steroids are remarkably similar in structure to anabolic steroids found naturally in our body. This makes Korean ginseng ideal for athletes and body builders looking for a natural alternative to anabolic steroid.

Ginseng products are popularly referred to as "tonics," a term that has been replaced by "adaptogens" in much of the alternative medicine literature. The term "adaptogen" connotes an agent that purportedly "increases resistance to physical, chemical, and biological stress and builds up general vitality, including the physical and mental capacity for work."

Panax ginseng is one of the most commonly used and highly researched species of ginseng. This species, which is native to China, Korea, and Russia, has been an important herbal remedy in traditional Chinese medicine for thousands of years, where it has been used primarily as a treatment for weakness and fatigue.

Panax ginseng is used for improving thinking, concentration, memory and work efficiency, physical stamina, and athletic endurance. Some people use *Panax ginseng* to help them cope with stress and as a general tonic for improving well being.

Panax ginseng is also used for depression, anxiety, chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), for boosting the immune system, and for fighting particular infections in a lung disease called cystic fibrosis. These infections are caused by a bacterium named *Pseudomonas*. Studies have found that ginseng seems to increase the number of immune cells in the blood.

Some people use *Panax ginseng* to treat breast cancer and prevent ovarian cancer, liver cancer, lung cancer, and skin cancer. *Panax ginseng* may have estrogenic activity. Patients with hormone-sensitive cancer should seek medical council.

Other uses include treatment of anemia, diabetes, inflammation of the stomach lining (gastritis), fever, hangover, and asthma. *Panax ginseng* is also used for bleeding disorders, loss of appetite, vomiting, intestinal problems, fibromyalgia, sleeping problems (insomnia), nerve pain, joint pain, dizziness, headache, convulsions, disorders of pregnancy and childbirth, menopause, postmenopausal symptoms and to slow the aging process.

Asian ginseng seems to have antioxidant effects, meaning it helps rid the body of free radicals, substances, which can damage DNA and are thought to contribute to heart disease, diabetes, and other conditions. Preliminary studies suggest Asian ginseng may improve the symptoms of heart disease in humans. It also may decrease "bad" LDL cholesterol levels and raise "good" HDL cholesterol.

Individual reports and animal studies indicate that Asian ginseng may slow the progression of Alzheimer's, decrease senility, and improve memory and behavior.

Several studies suggest that Asian ginseng may reduce the risk of some types of cancers.

A number of studies have found that Asian ginseng seems to inhibit the growth of tumors.

Both the Asian and American forms of ginseng enhance libido and copulatory performance. These effects of ginseng may not be due to changes in hormone secretion, but to the direct effects of ginseng, or its ginsenoside components, on the central nervous system and gonadal tissues. Some men use *Panax ginseng* on the skin of the penis as part of a multi-ingredient product for treating early orgasm (premature ejaculation). Men also use it for erectile dysfunction (ED). There is good evidence that ginsenosides can facilitate penile erection by directly inducing the vasodilatation and relaxation of penile corpus cavernosa. Moreover, the effects of ginseng on the corpus cavernosa appear to be mediated by the release of nitric oxide from endothelial cells and from nerves that surround the vessels.

The roots of Chinese and American ginseng contain several saponins named ginsenosides that are believed to contribute to their properties. Saponins are interesting

natural compounds found in many plants, herbs, roots, and beans. They are used in traditional Chinese medicine to improve stamina and combat fatigue and stress. They inhibit the formation of lipid peroxides (fat oxidation) in cardiac muscle and in the liver, influence the function of enzymes, decrease blood coagulation, cholesterol, and sugar levels in the blood, and stimulate the immune system. Some saponins may even have anti-tumor properties.

In Western medicine, Panax ginseng is used as a stimulant to make people more active. But, in contrast, in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), Panax ginseng is used to make people feel calmer. It is also widely used in China for the heart and blood vessels. Higher doses are generally used in TCM than in Western medicine.

Overall, Panax ginseng appears to be well tolerated, although caution is advised about concomitant use with some pharmaceuticals. Discontinue ginseng at least one week before surgery.



Be sure to try NSP's Ginseng, Korean (100 caps), Solstic Energy (30 packets) or Adaptamax® (100 caps).

References:

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Yours in Good Health!

Sincerely,

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