

Ashwagandha - An Evergreen Shrub



Ashwagandha is an evergreen shrub that grows in Asia and Africa. It is commonly used for stress. Its botanical source is *Withania Somnifera*, (family – Solanaceae) and its very revered herb of the Indian Ayurvedic system of medicine as a Rasayana (tonic). It is used for various kinds of disease processes and specially as a nervine tonic. It is commonly known as “Indian Winter cherry” or “Indian Ginseng”. It is one of the most important herb of Ayurveda (the traditional system of medicine in India) used for millennia as a Rasayana for its wide ranging health benefits.

Rasayana is described as an herbal or metallic preparation that promotes a youthful state of physical and mental health and expands happiness. These types of remedies are given to small children as tonics, and are also taken by the middle-aged and elderly to increase longevity. Among the ayurvedic Rasayana herbs, Ashwagandha holds the most prominent place. It is known as “Sattvic Kapha Rasayana” Herb (Changhadi, 1938). Most of the Rasayana herbs are adaptogen / anti-stress agents.

Ashwagandha contains chemicals that might help calm the brain, reduce swelling, lower blood pressure, and alter the immune system.

Ashwagandha is commonly available as a churna, a fine sieved powder that can be mixed with water, ghee (clarified butter) or honey. It enhances the function of the brain and nervous system and improves the memory. It improves the function of the reproductive system promoting a healthy sexual and reproductive balance. Being a powerful adaptogen, it enhances the body's resilience to stress. Ashwagandha improves the body's defence against disease by improving the cell-mediated immunity. It also possesses potent antioxidant properties that help protect against cellular damage caused by free radicals.

For most of these 6000 years Ashwagandha has been used as a Rasayana. The root of Ashwagandha is regarded as tonic, aphrodisiac, narcotic, diuretic, anthelmintic, astringent, thermogenic and stimulant. The root smells like horse (“ashwa”), that is why it is called Ashwagandha (on consuming it gives the power of a horse).



The Nagori Ashwagandha is the supreme among all Ashwagandha varieties. Maximum benefit appears when fresh Ashwagandha powder is used. The leaves are bitter and are recommended in fever, painful swellings. The flowers are astringent, depurative, diuretic and aphrodisiac. The seeds are anthelmintic and combined with astringent and rock salt remove white spots from the cornea. Ashwagandharishta prepared from it is used in hysteria, anxiety, memory loss, syncope, etc. It also acts as a stimulant and increases the sperm count.

The popularity of Ashwagandha supplements has led to hundreds of brands flooding the marketplace. However not all ashwagandha supplements are created equal! So which ones are really effective? Our research examines a number of different factors:

- Essential Ingredients
- Label Accuracy
- Potential Results*
- Product Safety

It is likely unsafe to use ashwagandha when pregnant. There is some evidence that ashwagandha might cause miscarriages. There isn't enough reliable information to know if ashwagandha is safe to use when breastfeeding. Stay on the safe side and avoid use.

Ashwagandha might cause the immune system to become more active, and this could increase the symptoms of auto-immune diseases. If you have "Auto-immune diseases" such as multiple sclerosis (MS), lupus (systemic lupus erythematosus, SLE), rheumatoid arthritis (RA), or other conditions, it's best to avoid using ashwagandha. Some medications, such as those used, decrease the activity of the immune system. Taking ashwagandha along with these medications might decrease the effects of these medications.

Ashwagandha might cause sleepiness and slowed breathing. Some medications, called sedatives, can also cause sleepiness and slowed breathing. Taking ashwagandha with sedative medications might cause breathing problems and/or too much sleepiness.

Ashwagandha might increase thyroid hormone levels. Ashwagandha should be used cautiously or avoided if you have a thyroid condition or take thyroid hormone medications. The body naturally produces thyroid hormones. Ashwagandha might increase how much thyroid hormone the body produces. Taking ashwagandha with thyroid hormone pills might cause too much thyroid hormone in the body, and increase the effects and side effects of thyroid hormone.

Ashwagandha might lower blood sugar levels. Taking ashwagandha along with diabetes medications might cause blood sugar to drop too low. Monitor your blood sugar closely.

Ashwagandha might lower blood pressure. Taking ashwagandha along with medications that lower blood pressure might cause blood pressure to go too low. Monitor your blood pressure closely.