



Boost your Energy Levels with Panax Ginseng

Panax is a type of perennial plant with fleshy roots, and grows in Eastern Asia. Ginsengs contain ginsenosides that are triterpene saponins, steroidal compounds that are found only in Panax ginseng. The effects of these saponins are difficult to establish, but they are believed to be behind the properties of ginseng.

Panax ginseng is found predominantly in Korea, China and Siberia, although a genus has also been found in Vietnam. Panax are adaptogenic herbs that help promote resistance to anxiety, fatigue and stress, and are said to adapt the body to resist a number of different stressors. It has been proposed that adaptogenic herbs can balance the endocrine hormones of the hypothalamus, pituitary and adrenal axis.

They also normalize the immune system, and increase the activity of phagocytes, the killer cells. Additionally, they not only help to maintain homeostasis, but are believed to go further and act as allostatic agents, adapting response to maintain system stability in a more dynamic fashion, by changing interactive functions as opposed to the individual adaption's made in homeostasis.

Not all ginsengs are the same, and although Siberian ginseng is an adaptogen, it is not a true ginseng. Its roots are woody rather than fleshy, and it contains eleutherosides as opposed to ginsenosides. These also are triterpenoid saponins, but of a different adaptogen. The herb is actually *Eleutherococcus senticosus* as opposed to Panax ginseng and *P. quinquefolius*, both true ginsengs. Siberian ginseng was misnamed as a marketing ploy.

American ginseng is Panax quinquefolius, sometimes referred to by the Chinese as Huaqishen. It, too, is an adaptogen and a true ginseng, containing ginsenosides. However, it contains much less ginsenoside Rg1 than panax. This ginsenoside appears to possess estrogen-like activity and improves spatial learning. The other forms of ginsenoside found in panax ginseng are:

Ginsenoside Rb1: This appears in greatest concentration in American ginseng, and appears to have an effect on the reproductive system. It not only has an effect on the testicles, but is believed to increase testosterone production through its stimulating effect on luteinizing hormone. It also helps to reduce the incidence of angiogenesis, which is the formation of new blood vessels from old, and also a stage in the development of malignant tumors from dormant ones.



Ginsenoside Rc: this possesses sedative properties, and in a study on breast cancer was found to have an effect in inhibiting the growth of these particular cancer cells.

Ginsenoside Rc might therefore have use in the treatment or prevention of breast cancer. Studies have also suggested that this ginsenoside could increase the motility of sperm: the motility of sperm was found to increase significantly in a solution of ginsenoside Rc.

Ginsenoside Rf: this is present only in panax ginseng, and studies have indicated that it has an inhibitory effect on the Ca²⁺ neural channels in the brain, and so could have an analgesic effect. Studies have as yet failed to explain this effect that is seen in animal tests, but are continuing on this ginsenoside.

Ginsenoside Re: this ginsenoside has strong antioxidant effects and has a significant antidiabetic effect in that it reduces insulin resistance, which is likely why ginseng is taken to treat Type 2 diabetes. Studies are ongoing into the properties of this ginsenoside, and also on the other 10 or more that are known to be present in Panax ginseng. The effects of ginseng are difficult to establish with certainty because they work through so many different pathways and it is difficult to isolate one. More than one ginsenoside, for example, affects the calcium channels in the brain, and it is difficult to determine which does what.

There are fewer ginsenosides in Panax quinquefolius, and in the USA it is only the panax version that can be traded as simply 'ginseng'. One of the main problems with all ginsengs is that although it is one of the most studied plants, the majority of the studies have been on animals, and due to this, and the difficulties caused by the multiple pathways described earlier, many of the postulations have not been proved in humans.

However, if the theory as it is known today is taken into consideration along with the traditional uses of ginseng in traditional Indian (ayurvedic), Chinese and Native American medicine, it would be fairly accurate to say that ginseng is useful in helping your body to recover after illness or surgery, and to help you to deal with stress. It has also been proved to lower your blood glucose (sugar) levels, and help in the treatment of Type II diabetes, as already mentioned. There is evidence that it helps to boost your mental performance, memory and might help to slow down the onset of Alzheimer's disease.

Ginseng can also give a boost to your energy levels, and it is generally accepted that panax ginseng is more effective than the American version. In traditional medicine, Asian ginseng is said to be warming, and the American variety cooling. Thus Panax ginseng is useful for people recovering from illness and trying to recover their strength, acts as a tonic, stimulant and supports the immune system. In other words it helps the body to get whole again after being depleted.



It should not be used if you get very hot and red, such as with heat stroke, unless you use it in combination with the American version, because these are conditions of high yang and this type of ginseng will increase the yang even further.

American ginseng, on the other hand, is good for those with fevers, hypertension (high blood pressure), and suffering the effects of heat. It helps build the yin and reduce the yang, so if you always feel flushed and hot or are hyperactive then go for the American, and if you easily get chilled or find your hands and feet get cold very easily, reach for the Asian ginseng to increase your yang.

You often find ginseng as an ingredient in soft drinks, but the concentration is so low that it has no metabolic or pharmacological effect. The dose to be taken should be as stated on the pack, since there is no specific standardization. It has been noted that the effects can be lost if an excess of ginseng is taken, but generally the herb is safe and if you feel a bit down or lacking in energy, ginseng can work wonders for you.



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