

WITHANIA

(*Withania somnifera*)

Clinical Summary

Actions

- Adaptogen
- Anxiolytic
- Nervine Tonic
- Tonic
- Mild Sedative
- Aphrodisiac
- Anti-inflammatory
- Antitumour
- Antioxidant
- Immunomodulatory
- Cardioprotective

Indications

- Anxiety, insomnia, stress especially with debility and nervous exhaustion, wasting disorders, especially in children and the elderly, exhaustion associated with reduced iron levels, anaemia
- Longevity and conditions associated with aging such as memory loss, Parkinson's disease, cardiovascular disease (combines well with *Terminalia arjuna*)
- Chronic and degenerative diseases, especially of an inflammatory nature, such as arthritis, hypothyroidism and insulin resistance
- Reproductive health, low libido, impotence due to stress and poor vitality
- Possible prophylactic in cancer and adjunctive treatment during chemotherapy
- Assistance in the withdrawal of addictive drugs

Traditional Use

Withania is a revered medicinal plant that has been used in Ayurvedic and indigenous medicine for millennia to relieve stress, increase energy levels and improve concentration. In Ayurveda withania is referred to as a rasayana. Most of the rasayana herbs are adaptogen and anti-stress agents. Among the Ayurvedic rasayana herbs withania holds the most prominent place.

Energetics

Warm, moist, sweet, astringent, bitter.

Constituents

Alkaloids, steroidal lactones, saponins, iron, phytosterols. Two withanolides, withaferin A and withanolide D, are regarded as quality markers.

Use in Pregnancy

Withania is used as a tonic to support pregnancy and lactation, and to prevent miscarriage, in the Ayurvedic tradition. However Western texts urge caution in pregnancy due to reputed abortifacient activity and antifertility effects when taken in large doses which were noted in early animal studies despite there being no evidence of foetal damage.

Contraindications and Cautions

Use with caution in peptic ulcer disease as withania may cause gastrointestinal irritation. People who are sensitive to the Solanaceae family should use this herb with caution.

Drug Interactions

Caution with benzodiazepines antidiabetic, central nervous system depressant and immunosuppressant drugs. Monitor with antihypertensive drugs. Combination may be beneficial with antipsychotic drugs such as haloperidol, clomipramine and chemotherapeutic agents. Medical supervision is recommended.

Administration and Dosage

Liquid extract 1:1 in 45% alcohol
15 to 40mL weekly