

ADAPTOGENS: Healthy Heart

Tonics, antioxidants, amphoterics, adaptogens

Many herbs have these properties but all herbs in these categories are not adaptogens. TONIC herbs alleviate conditions of weakness within the body. Their main function is to supplement deficiencies and enhance energy and well-being. Tonic herbs can be taken every day usually with no side effects. They usually support a single system. ANTIOXIDANT herbs promote the beneficial effect of free radical scavenging mechanisms. For instance, green tea, rosemary and bilberry have antioxidant properties. AMPHOTERIC herbs normalize functions of an organ or system within the body. Hawthorn tonifies the cardiovascular system and milky oats supports the nervous system.

ADAPTOGENS increase the body's ability to adapt to environmental and internal stress by strengthening the immune, nervous and endocrine systems. They normalize metabolic functions and efficiency, increase resistance and resilience to stress, and they reach influence many systems together. They regulate the hypothalamic-pituitary axis and thus affecting the broad reach of adrenal hormones.

ADAPTOGENS THAT ARE CARDIOPROTECTIVE:

American ginseng, ashwaghandha, Chinese ginseng, astragalus, cordyceps, eleuthro or Siberian ginseng, reishi, rhodiola schisandra, jiaogulan

ADAPTOGENS THAT LOWER CHOLESTEROL:

American ginseng, Chinese ginseng, cordyceps, eleuthro or Siberian ginseng, holy basil, licorice, reishi, rhodiola, jiaogulan

ADAPTOGENS THAT HELP TO REGULATE BLOOD PRESSURE: astragalus, cordyceps, holy basil, reishi, jiaogulan

A FEW COMMENTS ON INDIVIDUAL ADAPTOGENS:

American ginseng helps to raise HDL (good cholesterol) and reduce total cholesterol

Ashwaghandha used as a powder in milk or other liquids or with molasses is rich in iron.

Astragalus is useful to treat angina and mild congestive heart failure.

Cordyceps helps to regulate blood pressure and strengthens the heart.

Eleuthro relieves angina and lowers LDL cholesterol (bad portion) and triglycerides.

Jaoigulan reduces LDL and VLDL(bad cholesterol) and triglycerides, inhibits platelet aggregation, improves cardiac function.

Reishi lowers LDL and VLDL (bad cholesterol) and triglycerides, inhibits plate aggregation, mildly lowers blood pressure. It decreases symptoms of angina, arrhythmias (irregular heart beats) prevents Hardening of the arteries.

Rhodiola prevents stress-induced cardiac damage, arrhythmias, and strengthens the heart.

Schisandra normalizes blood pressure both raising and lowering blood pressure to a more normal range, its amphoteric property.

For those with diabetes mellitus type II some of the adaptogenic herbs help to regulate blood sugar too: American ginseng, Chinese ginseng, cordyceps eleuthero, holy basil, licorice, reishi, rhodiola.

American ginseng, panax quinquefolia: root, adaptogen, antioxidant, bitter tonic, mild central nervous system stimulant, demulcent (soothes mucous membranes), hypoglycemic, immune amphoteric. Useful to re-establish balance with hormones (amphoteric) especially with mild depletion of HPA axis and adrenal glands, immune benefits helpful to reduce allergies and allergic asthma, regulates overly stressed states like chronic fatigue thus helping with sleep in depleted states, relieves jet lag, improves male sexual tone

Dose: Tincture (1:5) 60-90 drops three times a day.

Tea/decoction 1-2 tsp root in 12 oz water, decoct 30 minutes 4 oz three times a day

Capsules 2 500 mg capsules twice a day.

Drug interactions: may affect warfarin (Coumadin).

Safety: in general safe, no data on pregnancy.

Astragalus membranaceus: root, adaptogen, antimicrobial, antioxidant, heart tonic, hepatoprotective, and deep immune tonic. Use to recover from debilitating infection when fatigue is prominent, improves tolerance to chemotherapy and especially radiation therapy

Dose: Tincture: (1:5) 40-80 drops, up to 3 times daily.

Tea: 2 tsp in 12 oz hot water, decoct for 20 minutes, and let it steep 30 minutes, 2-3 cups a day

Capsules 1000-4000 mg per day, start at 1000 mg twice a day.

Drug interactions: very safe.

Safety: do not use for an acute infection.

Pregnancy: teratogenic in mice

Chinese ginseng, panax ginseng: root, adaptogen antioxidant, central nervous system stimulant, immune amphoteric, anti-inflammatory. Helpful with exhaustion (sometimes combined with licorice and scisandra) to regulate the HPA axis, immune system and nervous system, when emotional problems cause insomnia, poor memory, and depression; may be helpful with slowing Alzheimer's dementia and often used with holy basil, white peony, ginkgo leaf, bacopa.

Dose: Tincture (1:5) 20-40 drops up to three times a day.

Tea/decoction 1-2 tsp in 8oz, decoct 30 minutes, up to two cups per day.

Capsules: 2 400-500 mg capsules, 2-3 times day,

Drug interactions: may increase level of warfarin (Coumadin), may lower blood sugar, increase the effects of MAOIs (monoamine oxidase inhibitors, antidepressant).

Safety: may increase agitation when too much caffeine is consumed, overstimulating for some people especially when used as red ginseng (steamed root).

Pregnancy: terotegenic in mice

Cordyceps sinensis: mushroom, adaptogen, antasthmatic, antileukemic, antioxidant, hepatoprotective, hypocholesterolemic, immune amphoteric, nephroprotective (kidney) and sedative. Helps to protect white blood cell production from negative effects of chemotherapy, and beneficial with chronic fatigue syndrome.

Dose: Tincture (1:5) 20- 40 drops, up to 3 times a day.

Tea/decoction: ¼ to 13 tsp powder or crushed root in 10 oz, decoct 15 minutes, steep for 1 hour,

Use 1-2 cups a day.

Drug interactions: safe with organ transplant drugs, protective to kidney with nephrotoxic drugs like amikacin, gentamicin, prednisone.

Safety: may cause edema, anxiety and headaches.

Pregnancy: insufficient data

Eleuthro or Eleuthrococcus senticosus (Siberian ginseng): root and stem bark, adaptogen, anticholesterol, antioxidant, immune tonic. Used more often in middle age (30-60 yrs) for those who work and play hard and do not get enough sleep, enhances endurance in atheletes, sometimes combined with rhodiola, cordyceps or schisandra for shift workers.

Dose: Tincture (1:4) 60-100 drops 3-4 times a day.

Tea/decoction: 1-2 tsp in 12-16 oz water, decoct 20-30 minutes, steep 1 hour. Up to 3 cups a day

Drug Interaction: avoid use with digoxin, improves effectiveness of antibiotics in –mycin family. E.g azithromycin, erythromycin

Safety: May be over-stimulating in some people.

Pregnancy: insufficient data

Holy Basil (*ocicum sanctum*) also call Tulsi: herb, adaptogen, antibacterial, antidepressant, antioxidant, antiviral, carminative (decreases gas), diuretic, expectorant, galactagogue (increases production of breast milk), immunomodulator. Rasayana, it balances all doshas thus promoting health, protects against radiation, reduces stress, prevents elevation of corticosteroid levels, lowers blood sugar, prevents gastric ulcers, reduces allergy symptoms, improves cerebral circulation and thereby enhances memory (often used with bacopa, rosemary), helpful with ADHD and recovery from head trauma. In stagnant depression often used with rosemary, lavender.

Dose: Tincture 1:5-1:2 40-60 drops up to 3 times a day.

Tea: 1 tsp dried leaf to 8oz water, steep 5-10 minutes. 2-3 cups a day.

Drug interaction: may increase bleeding with other anti-coagulants, may increase level so phenobarbital.

Safety: may decrease sperm counts.

Pregnancy: insufficient data

Jiaogulan or *Gynostemma pentaphyllum*, herb, adaptogen, antioxidant, expectorant, hepatoprotective, anti-cholesterol, hypotensive, immune system tonic, nervine. Supportive in cancer to prevent immunosuppression, combines nicely with hawthorn to prevent angina and congestive heart failure

Dose: Tincture (1:5) 80-120 drops up to three times a day.

Tea 1-2 tsp in 80 oz water, steep 40 minutes, use 1-3 cups a day.

Drug Interactions: avoid with warfarin (Coumadin). Be careful with benzodiazepines due to sedation

Safety: sedating. Preferably do not take on empty stomach, rash fatigue, palpitations.

Pregnancy: teratogenic in mice

Licorice, *glycyrrhiza glabra*: root, adaptogen, antiviral, antidiuretic, antihistamine, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antitumor, demulcent, expectorant, hepatoprotective, and immunomodulator. Soothes gastric and small intestine irritation with irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn's and Ulcerative colitis; relieves dry cough, asthma wheezing; supports HPA axis, immune response in cancer and chronic fatigue; reduces immune response in rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, scleroderma, and allergies; topical forms relieve the pain of herpes outbreaks; use with black cohosh, chaste-tree, sage for hot flashes.

Dose: Tincture (1:5) 10-20 drops up to three times a day.

Tea/decoction ½ tsp in 8 oz decoct for 15 minutes then steep for 10 minutes, 1-2 cups a day.

Drug interactions: be careful with potassium depleting diuretics (hydrochlorothiazide, furosemide, bumex for instance), digoxin and MAOIs antidepressants. Avoid long term use with warfarin (coumadin). Grapefruit juice consumption may increase the sodium retention.

Safety: monitor potassium levels for longterm use. Might increase blood pressure. To avoid these side effects use the de-glycyrrhized forms (DGL).

Pregnancy: avoid

Reishi, *ganoderma lucidum*: mushroom, mild adaptogen, anti-cholesterol, anti-inflammatory, antiviral, antioxidant, heart tonic, hepatoprotective, immunomodulator, nervine. Emotional problems that lead to anxiety, insomnia, bad dreams, moodiness, listlessness and poor memory; down regulates immune response in auto-immune diseases; anti-inflammatory effects are useful with Hepatitis B and C, asthma and COPD; restores adrenal function, prevents altitude sickness when started one month in advance.

Dose: Tincture (1:5) 80-100 drops per day, divided 4-5 times.

Tea/decoction 1-2 ounces in 32 oz water, decoct 2-4 hours until reduced to 16 oz, 3-4 cups a day.

Capsules: 500 mg capsules, up to 2 capsules three times a day

Drug interactions: doses above 3000 mg may affect platelet aggregation, may lower blood sugar and blood pressure.

Safety: dry mouth, throat and nasal areas, itchiness, rash with reishi wine or inhalation of spores

Pregnancy: caution, use less than a month

Rhodiola, rhodiola rosea: root, adaptogen, antidepressant, antioxidant, antiviral, immune stimulant, nervine, mild central nervous system stimulant, antiarrhythmic, cardioprotective, neuroprotective. A cooling effect so there is less overstimulation(nervousness or insomnia) that can occur with red ginseng; prevent and treats immune depletion from overwork, chemotherapy or radiation therapy; useful in Parkinson disease to relieve stiffness and spasms; improves male and female reproductive function; lessens erectile dysfunction and relieves amenorrhea and infertility in women: reduces stress induced heart damage and arrhythmias. Consider in fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue.

Dose: Tincture (1:4) 40-60 drops up to three times a day.

Tea/Tincture 1-2 tsp in 8 oz water, decoct for 15 minutes. 1-3 cups a day.

Capsules: 500 mg, use 1000-2000 mg daily

Drug interactions: may lower blood sugar due to alpha-glucosidase activity, and may lower blood pressure

Safety: dizziness, dry mouth

Pregnancy: safe for short term use < 10 weeks

Schisandra chinensis: fruit and seed, adaptogen, antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, immune tonic, astringent, hepatoprotective, nervine, expectorant. Astringent property reduces diarrhea, frequent urination, excess vaginal discharge, and premature ejaculation. May reduce night sweats and excessive sweating, and possible hot flashes. Useful in wet coughs associated with asthma or COPD; reduces stress-induced palpitations, deficient insomnia, anxiety and bad dreams. Hepatoprotective due to strong antioxidant effects. Improves reflexes, work performance, and mental activity. Normalizes blood pressure (amphoteric). Used with bacopa, fresh oats, rhodiola ADHD.

Dose: Tincture (1:5) 40-80 drops , 3-4 times a day.

Tea/decoction 1-2 tsp dried berries in 8 oz water, decoct 5-10 minutes, use 1-2 cups a day

Capsules 400-500 mg capsules. 1-2 up to three times a day.

Drug interactions: increase the effect of barbiturates, prevent liver damage from acetaminophen and tetracycline.

Safety: avoid with acute infections. Decreased appetite, stomach pain, hives or rash.

Pregnancy: avoid

Reference: ADAPTOGENS by David Winston and Steven Maimes

