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*Adaptogens  
for stress*

## **Adapt-a-What? The Definition of Adaptogens**

If your first response to the word adaptogen is “adapto-what?,” you’re not alone. These naturally occurring substances are just making their way into the popular health scene in the West. But the truth is adaptogens have been used for thousands of years. Adaptogens are naturally occurring, non-toxic substances that can help protect your body from stress by stabilizing and optimizing a host of physiological functions. Rather than serving a single targeted purpose, an adaptogen will adapt its healing properties to whatever your body specifically needs at a given time.

In order to formally qualify as an adaptogen, these natural substances must meet the following criteria:

- They must be safe for long-term use, non-toxic, and non-habit forming
- They must have a non-specific effect on the body
- They must help normalize system functions and maintain a state of homeostasis or overall balance

Think of adaptogens this way:

You know that good friend who comes over to your house to vent after she’s had a bad day. But then they see that you’re over-the-moon about some terrific news. So they promptly adjust their demeanor to celebrate your happiness with you? That’s what an adaptogen does in the human body. It senses what the body needs and alters its behavior in whatever way necessary to foster peak wellbeing.

## **Specific Benefits of Adaptogens**

Among other benefits, adaptogens have been shown to:

- Minimize fatigue and improve focus and endurance in the face of fatigue (source)
- Promote overall wellness (source)
- Protect your body from stress (source)
- Reduce the circulation of cortisol through your body (source)

What’s more, these benefits are achieved gradually and gently without letdowns or energy crashes.

### **1. Asian ginseng root (Panax ginseng)**

Arguably the world's most researched herb, Asian ginseng is known to help promote and sustain natural energy levels and supports occasional stress (source). It's a household herb, but still not enough people leverage this proven super herb. As a fun fact, the English word "ginseng" derives from the Chinese term renshen. Ren means "person" and shen means "plant root", which makes sense as the root looks a little bit like the legs of a person. Asian ginseng is commonly used to replenish energy, depression, anxiety, reduce stress, promote relaxation, and menopausal hot flashes.

### **2. Ashwagandha**

Known as one of the most powerful herbs in Ayurvedic healing, ashwagandha has been used for a wide variety of conditions. It is sometimes called "Indian Ginseng" because of its extensive use in Ayurvedic medicine. While Ashwagandha is often promoted as a sex herb and for sports performance, I would personally recommend this herb in the evening for occasional stress support. After all, it's Latin species name (somnifera) translates into "sleep-inducing". It can also help with daily stress, reduce cortisol, reduce anxiety and reduce inflammation.

### **3. Eleuthero root (Siberian ginseng)**

Also known as Siberian ginseng, eleuthero is an adaptogenic root native to Northeastern Asia. Used in Chinese, Russian and Korean folk medicine, eleuthero could support stamina, endurance, and overall wellbeing. Despite being one of the five original adaptogens, this herb is chronically underappreciated. Very few even health conscious consumers know about it. The plant is mostly used in traditional medicines as an adaptogen, a compound that helps the body better handle and adapt to stress - improving resiliency to daily stress. Eleuthero also acts as a stimulant, increasing nervous system function.

#### 4. **Rhodiola Rosea**

Often called the “Golden Root”, rhodiola root is a legit super herb, known for its support of concentration and memory. Rhodiola is one the TOP Nordic superfoods (along with chaga, pine, nettle, and sea buckthorn) and even the Vikings were known to consume it before going into battle. Rhodiola is used for increasing energy, stamina, strength and mental capacity; and as a so-called “adaptogen” to help the body adapt to and resist physical, chemical, and environmental stress. Studies suggest it may help with fatigue and brain function. \*Licorice can also help with energy early in the day.

#### 5. **Tulsi (Holy Basil)**

For more than 5,000 years, the adaptogenic herb Tulsi is one of the most sacred herbs in India. You may know it as Holy Basil. Its name means “matchless” and I really think it has no match, particularly in its ability to support skin, hair, nails, and hormone function. And that’s just scratching the surface. Imagine being able to tackle stress, anxiety, and inflammation with a relaxing cup of tea made with the leaves of Tulsi. As an adaptogen with anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties, Tulsi provides all of these benefits. It can even help people with arthritis or fibromyalgia. Of everything, Tulsi is my FAVORITE calming tea for helping people relax in the evening and set up for good quality restorative sleep.

#### **Time your adaptogens right;**

It is suggested taking stimulating adaptogens, like rhodiola, earlier in the day, before 3 pm, to align with the body’s natural rhythms. Calming adaptogens, like holy basil, can be taken both in the daytime and before bed, however. They aren’t strong enough to have a sedative effect. For dosing, follow instructions that come with product information. A naturopathic physician can recommend specific adaptogens and reputable formulas or tinctures. Plus, a naturopathic doctor or can adjust your dosage up or down as needed based on the effects you hope to achieve.