

10 of the Best Adaptogenic Herbs for Managing Stress

It's no wonder that the traditional systems of medicine both in India and China have been using adaptogenic herbs for thousands of years. These herbs help ward off stress and promote energy, calm, and balance throughout the body.

The tonifying properties of adaptogens (“tonifying” means increasing the available energy of a body part or system) truly are special in that **these precious substances help to uplift the body while simultaneously leveling it out**. Much like how a thermostat keeps the temperature inside your home not too warm, and not too cool, but just right.

So what are some of the more popular adaptogens and how do they work? Here are 10 of them that time-honored tradition and science alike hold in high esteem for their powerful stress-killing potential:

- **Ashwagandha**. Arguably the most highly prized of the adaptogenic herbs, ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*), also known as Indian ginseng, has a multi-millennia track record of powerful tonic effects in the realm of supporting immunity and emotional balance. Eastern medicine has long recognized the incredible ability of ashwagandha to support balanced cortisol levels while helping to mitigate stress.
- **Astragalus**. A popular herb in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), astragalus (*Astragalus propinquus*) is similarly suited to support the immune system while buffering the effects of stress. Astragalus is also said to help the body in repairing stress-related damage from the past, while at the same time redirecting cortisol away from vulnerable stress receptors.
- **Cordyceps**. A nutrient-dense mushroom from the endoparasitoid family, the cordyceps (*Ophiocordyceps sinensis*) fungi isn't technically an adaptogen in a traditional sense. But it does possess powerful adaptogenic properties as they pertain to immunomodulation and stress relief, which makes it a worthwhile option.

- **Eleuthero**. Also known as Siberian ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*), eleuthero has many of the same properties as ashwagandha and astragalus, with the added bonus of helping to support increased energy levels and optimal sexual function.
- **Holy basil**. Sometimes referred to as Tulsi, holy basil (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*) is particularly suited to help the body better respond to both physical and emotional stress. Its tonifying effects specifically on the mind are what set it apart from some of the other adaptogens, and many regards it as being powerfully anti-aging as well.
- **Licorice root**. Known scientifically as *Glycyrrhiza glabra*, licorice root is another energizing adaptogen with immune-boosting properties and a special ability to help protect the thymus gland from being damaged by cortisol. It's important to use this one under the guidance of a qualified healthcare practitioner, though, because it can affect blood pressure levels.
- **Maca**. Also known as Peruvian ginseng (though it doesn't actually hail from the ginseng family), maca (*Lepidium meyenii*) is regarded as being one of the "lost crops of the Andes." It has long been prized by the native people of Peru as an herbal tonic of the highest order. Its many reported benefits include increased strength, stamina, energy, libido, and sexual function.
- **Panax Ginseng**. Sometimes referred to as Asian, Chinese, or Korean ginseng, Panax ginseng is the most well-studied of the ginseng varieties and is considered to be the "truest" form of ginseng. Panax ginseng is said to provide non-specific support against mental, physical, and environmental stressors.
- **Rhodiola rosea**. Both calming and invigorating, Rhodiola rosea is another powerful adaptogenic herb that combats stress as well as fatigue – hence its immense popularity throughout Siberia where it's natively grown.
- **Schisandra**. This incredible berry has been a staple of traditional medicine for centuries, as it's known to help protect against adrenal fatigue while supporting healthy inflammation levels. A robust fighter against free radicals, *schisandra* actually seeks out stress hormones in the blood and helps neutralize them. At the same time, it supports enhanced physical performance, endurance, and energy levels.