Ashwagandha
(Withania somnifera)

- Used traditionally as a tonic for fatigue, to improve mental performance and memory, and to prevent and treat (adjunctively) early stage Alzheimer’s
- Used traditionally as an adaptogen to improve physical performance, endurance, and resistance to the effects of stress
- Used traditionally to reduce inflammation
- Used traditionally for age-related or stress-related impotence

A first class tonic herb, ashwagandha has a long and distinguished history of use in Ayurvedic medicine, the traditional medical system of India. Dr. Michael Tierra calls ashwagandha India’s wonder herb and is of the opinion that it compares favourably to herbs like ginseng and astragalus, for example, the world’s most renowned herbal tonics.1

Tierra points out that ashwagandha “has been held in high regard by generations of people over the course of millennia for its ability to increase vitality, energy, endurance and stamina, promote longevity and strengthen the immune system without stimulating the body’s reserves. In fact, ashwagandha has the ability to nurture the nervous system, counteract anxiety and stress, and to promote a calm state of mind. This same herb, having powerful anti-inflammatory properties, is specific for treating arthritic and rheumatic conditions. As if all of this were not enough, it is easily one of the most potent tonic aphrodisiacs in the entire botanical kingdom.”2

Ashwagandha is a marvellously effective adaptogen, increasing the body’s resistance to environmental stresses. Medical herbalist Kerry Bone describes pharmacological research in support of the adaptogenic benefits of ashwagandha and concludes that: “Oral doses of ashwagandha demonstrated significant anti-stress activity, increased endurance, and enhanced growth and development in experimental models.”3

Ashwagandha’s most remarkable effect may involve its neuro-regenerative activity and its ability to preserve the health of the aging brain. Research indicates that ashwagandha extract is capable of halting and even repairing damage to brain cells in an experimentally induced model of Alzheimer’s disease.4 In laboratory experiments in India in 2004, researchers discovered that ashwagandha root extract inhibits acetylcholinesterase in much the same way as the prescription drug donepezil, which is currently used in the treatment of Alzheimer’s disease.5

In addition, a monograph published by the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Research Center suggests that ashwagandha’s anti-inflammatory effects are comparable to hydrocortisone.6

Finally, Dr. Michael Tierra considers ashwagandha a near specific for cases of male impotence.7

References:
2Ibid...
7Tierra, op. cit.
Ashwagandha
(Withania somnifera)

Product Monograph
By Terry Vanderheyden, ND

Administration:
Adults: Take 2.66 ml (80 drops) 3 times daily in a little water on an empty stomach.

Contraindications and Cautions:
Cautions and Warnings: Consult a health care practitioner before use if you are pregnant. Consumption with alcohol, other drugs or natural health products with sedative properties is not recommended.

Terry Vanderheyden, ND
(Research Consultant)

Since graduating from the CCNM in 1994, Terry Vanderheyden, ND, has practiced in Ontario, specializing in homeopathic, nutritional, and botanical therapies. Terry lives in Barry’s Bay with his wife Laurie and their 7 children.