

Adapt To The Stresses Of Life With Herbal Adaptogens

Life today places a number of different types of stresses upon us. There are the normal stresses of living, of facing problems at work, financial worries and family stresses. Schedules are becoming busier as we try to pack more and more into each day, and relaxation time is cut to a minimum. For many of us, the stress starts when we waken and rush through breakfast, if we have time for one, to catch the bus or train to work, or to slip into the morning traffic rush that takes us an hour to travel 10 miles or less.

Once at work we have problems to deal with that continue throughout a rushed lunch period, and then back to the stress of trying to return home in the evening to open the bills and check if we have enough in the bank to pay them. However, that is not all.

Our environment is continually changing, and our bodies are subject to the stresses of pollution from the planes, trains and automobiles, not to mention the pesticides, preservatives plastics and harsh lighting. The noise of air conditioning and the continual musak of the stores and shopping malls and everything else that goes to completely stress us out, weekdays and weekends.

That is ignoring the smog, the disappearing ozone layer and increased UV radiation, the greenhouse effect and global warming, El Nino and everything else that causes worry or affects the delicate balance of the body's biochemistry. Rather than adapting to our environment we are continually striving to adapt the environment to suit our needs. We should develop a flexibility of mind and body so that we can survive these modern-day stresses, and this is where the substances known as adaptogens are important.

Adaptogens help us to adapt to the environment and withstand the stresses of modern life. The term was first used by Russian N.V. Lazarev in 1947 who defined an adaptogen as a substance meeting three specific criteria: it should cause a minimal disruption to the normal physiological function of the body, it must work by means of a range of chemical, physical and biochemical factors rather than through one specific action and must have an overall effect of normalization, so that no condition is aggravated to improve another.

There are a large number of identified adaptogens, among them several forms of ginseng: Panax, American, Siberian and Japanese; licorice, schizandra berries, rhodiola and others. These adaptogens tend to work in the body by improving the body's availability and use of energy, improving the efficiency of removal of the metabolic waste and by-products, supporting the adrenal function so that the effects of stress are reduced or countered, improving the utilization of oxygen and helping to build up body tissue. In general the body works more efficiently in generating and using energy, muscle tissue and counteracting the effects of modern day stress, both environmental and psychological.

Of the ginsengs, Panax is very expensive for regular use, although many people prefer it. However, studies have shown that Siberian, or eleuthero ginseng, is a stronger adaptogen than Panax which is also called Korean or Chinese ginseng. In fact the other forms, including American and Japanese, tend to over-stimulate the body, and can also cause unwanted side effects such as constipation and over-excitement. The Siberian ginseng tends not to show these symptoms.

Siberian ginseng contains seven active substances known as eleutherosides A – F which are not present in the other ginsengs. These substances appear to have several properties that have been clinically proven. For example, they relieve insomnia, one of the symptoms of stress, high and low blood pressure, bronchitis, various forms of neuroses and, it is claimed, also some types of cancer. Siberian ginseng also allows humans to withstand noise, heat and extra stresses caused by severe workloads. It improves athletic performance and allows people to improve their work output under a variety of stresses. Athletes can train harder and recover quicker.

Another adaptogen is schizandra berries (also called schizandra chinensis and magnolia vine). Chinese herbalists class medicinal herbs by the five different flavors, sour, bitter, salty, acrid and sweet. Schizandra berries possess all five, and are therefore considered by the Chinese to balance all the systems of the body.

It is used in the West as a stress reducing adaptogen and is also included in sports and weight loss formulae. It helps insomnia and improves endurance and mental coordination. Schizandra is believed to be a good tonic for the liver and is often used in combination with Siberian ginseng (eleuthero) and licorice. The latter is another popular herb in China that is said to be a good tonic for the spleen. Licorice itself is a known anti-inflammatory since it contains flavanoids and saponins that promote the immune system. Licorice is thought to be a useful supplement for HIV patients due to its effect on the immune system. It also increases corticosteroid levels by inhibiting the liver's ability to break down adrenal hormone. However, people with high blood pressure should be careful with licorice since it can cause sodium retention. Like any other medication, you should seek your physician's advice if you have any existing conditions.

Rhodiola, also referred as roseroot, is used for improved memory and enhanced vitality and it can also be used as a mood modifier. It is used by

athletes of all types for increased strength and endurance, and improved cardiovascular and muscle recovery time. The Russians call it 'Golden Root' and it is a safe and effective adaptogen.

More and more people are turning to adaptogens to help them cope with the hustle and bustle of their daily lives, and they are becoming increasingly available from ordinary health stores. If you are finding it difficult to stay energetic and active then try them out. Not all work with every individual, but there is a large variety to choose from and most people are able to find an adaptogen that suits them and enables them to adapt to the stresses of daily life.

About the Author

More information on Ginseng and other [herbal adaptogens](http://vitanetonline.com/) can be found at <http://vitanetonline.com/> where a large selection of herbs and vitamins are available for purchase at discount prices.

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