

Review Article

Withania somnifera

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ABSTRACT

Withania somnifera commonly known as Ashwagandha is an important plant of family Solanaceae known for its rejuvenating properties. It is also known as Indian Ginseng. It is a very important herb of ayurvedic indigenous medical system known for more than 3000 years. Withania somnifera is a very small woody shrub native to drier parts of India. It is commonly found in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Africa. It is about 6 feet in height and herbaceous in nature, stem bases of the plant are thickened, cylindrical and green; leaves are erect, ovate in shape petiolate and glabrous. Roots are thickened, branched and brown in colour; fruits are orange coloured berries enclosing many small seeds covered with green persistent calyx.

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INTRODUCTION

In Modern era most of the diseases - be it acute or chronic, originates from emotional causes - stress, strain and anxiety.

It is observed that many organic diseases originate from mind. In allopathic system of medicine the treatment is mostly based on diagnosis made from physical investigation reports of the patient ignoring the mental reflex which may be the real cause of the physical disease.

It is also observed that if somebody suffers frequently from diseases then his protective power or natural immune system or resistance become low to combat ill effect of external stimuli be it bacterial or virus. Consequent upon this there will be frequent attack of diseases, which will make the person prematurely older than others. This is nothing but the damages that occur in DNA due to frequent suffering which makes the person prematurely old with symptoms like early gray or falling hair, wrinkle in the skin and various other genetic predisposed diseases like diabetes mellitus, hypertension,

bronchial asthma etc. and even cancer. All these are due to the disturbances of free radical and deoxygenation of the cells.

Nature is kind enough to mankind with her blessings in the form of plants minerals, chemicals etc. for the prevention and treatment of the above type of condition originating from faulty life style and through application of suppressive mode of treatment.

Indian scientists have found out a small herb, about one or one and half feet long, which mostly grow as bush in states of West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh in India. The root of the plant is used for preparation of medicine and the same belongs to Solanaceae group. The name of this plant is Aswagandha or Withania Somnifera (WS).

Aswagandha specially increases resistance power during stress by preventing decrease in ascorbic acid and controls levels and thus prevents the harmful effects of stress. Continuous tension stimulates the Adrenal glands to secrete harmful substance - "Cate

Cholamines” in the circulating blood, which causes irregularities in the heart beat. Such condition is also prevented by W.S.

It reduces anxiety neurosis, improves memory span, helps in gaining body weight and regulates Cardio-respiratory function. W.S. is having Withanoloid ‘A’ and ‘B’, which is responsible for preventing aging. W.S. will give vigor in mind and body, prevents high blood pressure, improves sleep, and prevents diseases of heart, nerves and even the diseases originating from hormone imbalance. It has got great power to improve sexual weakness, rheumatism and the diseases of brain, which are caused by modern mechanical life.

Other auxiliary methods to retrain mental stress

Mental stress can damage a healthy person and can take an unhealthy one to an extreme stage.

There are other auxiliary methods, which help to prevent the bad effects of mental stress.

To discuss on the matter one must know how much is the stress.

1. How is the mental stress and for how long it is going on?

2. How much is the power to bear the mental stress?

How much a person is getting help from his relatives, friends and others to release mental stress?

“Improve your resistance power”

This is often advised by Psychologist to fight the stress. It is true that nobody can make world stress free. Let us then see what are the ways and means to increase the limit of mental power to prevent the bad effects of stress other than medicinal treatment.

1. Yoga - Regular yoga will help to improve mental power to combat the bad effects of stress. Yogasana and Shabasana should be done under proper guidance.

2. Deep breathing exercise - which can be done in the house.

Keep the inspiratory air for longer period in the lungs after sitting erect with keeping vertebral column straight.

Release the air slowly when you find it is difficult to keep the air for longer period.

After repeating this for several times the

stress will be released.

3. Pranayam

Meditation - by this process a chemical named melatonin is discharged from post part of pineal gland in the brain. This chemical is anti diseases even for stress related cancer.

Process of meditation

a) Imagine a lighted candle flame after closing your eyes while sitting in padmasana.

b) Count in the reverse way from “200” to “0” after thinking slowly about the flame of the candle.

Firstly may be difficult in disturbed mind but will be easier once habituated to this. This will increase the resistance power against effects of stress in health.

Read book, see picture, do gardening to improve the nutrition in mind. Relaxation through various ways like listening song of your favourite artist.

Laugh loudly.

Lastly love yourself, love the people, and love your country.

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