

Ginseng

Ginseng is an herb that treats menopausal symptoms, sexual function, energy, and mood in post-menopausal women. In men, it improves erectile dysfunction.

Ginseng improves memory and attention. In ADHD, it improves hyperactive symptoms.

Ginseng also has medical benefits. In diabetes, it improves blood sugar levels. It protects the liver and vascular system, and may prevent cancer and respiratory disease.

How does it work?

Ginseng imitates the effects of estrogen in the body. It improves blood flow and modulates the cholinergic system involved in memory.

Ginseng is an herb with many ingredients. It contains flavonoids that protect the brain, essential oils, vitamins. However, the main source of its therapeutic effects are compounds called *ginsenosides*.

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How should I take it?

There are two types of ginseng: American and Asian (also called Panax, Chinese, or Korean ginseng). American ginseng is more potent (with more ginsenosides), but Asian ginseng is the better researched of the two.

The dose is typically 100 mg of root extract twice a day (if taking as root powder, it is 1,000 mg twice a day).



Risks and Side Effects

Ginseng can cause nausea, headache, racing heart, insomnia, vaginal bleeding, and breast pain. Some products contain caffeine and can cause anxiety.

Ginseng is not toxic in normal doses. Women with a history of breast cancer should avoid it due to its estrogen-like effects.

Pregnancy and breast-feeding: There is not enough reliable information about the safety of ginseng in pregnancy or breast-feeding. Stay on the safe side and avoid use.

Drug Interactions

Do not take ginseng with MAOI antidepressants. Ginseng can increase the risk of bleeding when taken with medications like warfarin (Coumadin), aspirin, or clopidogrel (Plavix). It may reduce the effectiveness of calcium channel blockers. Ginseng increases levels of some medications like imatinib (used to treat leukemia) and raltegravir (used to treat HIV).

What if I forget a dose?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember it, but if you are close to your next dose just wait and take that.

How long do I need to take it?

This depends on your diagnosis and which other medications you are taking.

What happens if I stop it?

Ginseng does not have known withdrawal problems.

How to purchase

Metal contaminants have been found in some ginseng products, so it's best to go with one that is backed by safety testing. Consumer Labs is an independent group that tests products. Their top choice is Solgar Korean Ginseng Root Extract.

Find links to the best priced options at:

www.chrisaikenmd.com/supplements

—Chris Aiken, MD, updated 6/28/2025