

Center for Integrative Medicine

Dietary Supplements: Ginseng

Ginseng is an herbal product widely used to promote vitality, improve the response to stress, and support the immune system. It is also used in combination with ginkgo to help children with ADHD. Several forms are available. Traditional Chinese (*Panax ginseng*), Russian (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*) ginseng, and North American (*Panax quinquefolius*) ginseng are most common. Unprocessed ginseng is mostly white; steamed, dried ginseng is red.

Studies on its effectiveness have had mixed results. This may be partly due to the **variability** in products tested. There is lot of variability in ginseng products; some contain toxic pesticides, and some have been laced with caffeine. The real active ingredients are called ginsenosides. Ideally Asian root powder products are standardized to contain a minimum of 1.5% total ginsenosides while extracts should provide a minimum of 3% total ginsenosides (30 mg/ gram). American ginseng root powder should contain a minimum of 2% total ginsenosides, while extracts should contain a minimum of 4% total ginsenosides (40 mg/gram). Avoid products that contain caffeine.

Preventing the common cold. Several studies in adults suggest that taking two pills daily of COLD-FX (a Canadian product using North American ginseng) for 3-4 months during cold/flu season reduced the risk of developing colds during the winter.

Lowering blood sugar after a meal in people with Type 2 diabetes. Taking 3000 milligrams of North American ginseng powder before a meal can lower blood sugar in patients with type 2 diabetes.

ADHD. A preliminary study suggests that AD-FX might help improve ADHD symptoms.

Dosing. Adults typically take 200 mg of standardized extract or 1000 – 2000 mg of root powder daily.

Safety. Studies and experts conflict on whether ginseng interacts with medicines for blood sugar, blood pressure, and blood clotting. Avoid taking ginseng if you suffer from bipolar or manic disorder. Do not take during pregnancy or while breastfeeding. Be aware that excessive intake is linked to insomnia.

See **patient information** from the US **National Library of Medicine**:

American ginseng: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/967.html>

Panax ginseng: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/1000.html>

Siberian ginseng: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/985.html>

Products With Positive Results in Clinical Studies

Panax quinquefolius

Brand Name (Manufacturer)

Cold-FX (Canada)

Selected Products Approved by ConsumerLabs in 2010

Asian

Nature Made Ginseng

Paradise Herbs Panax Red Ginseng

Pharmanex Energy Formula

Solgar Korean Ginseng

Spring Valley Standardized Extract Korean Ginseng

North American Ginseng products

Cold-FX

Puritan's Pride

Vitamin Shoppe

Whole Foods Triple Ginseng

www.wakehealth.edu/CIM - See Quick Link to Dietary Supplements