

Maca Root Improves Libido, Boosts Stamina, and Lowers Cholesterol

By: Michael Ravensthorpe, Natural News

Maca is a plant that is native to the Andes mountains of Peru, and which is characterized by its fleshy taproot. This taproot (which is usually what is meant when people speak of 'maca') has been used by the indigenous Peruvians for centuries as a vegetable and medicinal herb, and it remains prized today for its nutritional value and rejuvenating properties.

Maca root's health benefits

Improves libido - Arguably maca root's best-known benefit is its aphrodisiac qualities. Numerous studies abound on this issue, but perhaps the most telling of these is the one published in the 2008 edition of *CNS Neuroscience & Therapeutics*. For the study, the researchers analyzed 16 participants (mostly women) who were experiencing sexual issues due to their ongoing antidepressants usage. After regularly taking maca root for an extended period, the majority of volunteers experienced considerable libido improvements. Studies have also shown that maca root increases sperm production and can treat erectile dysfunction in men due to its high glucosinolate levels.

Increases stamina - If you've ever visited Macchu Picchu (Peru's 'city in the sky'), you might wonder how the Incas managed to lift so many heavy stones from the bottom of the mountain to its peak. However, we might have an answer: like many other superfoods (such as quinoa and spirulina) regularly consumed by these ancient people, maca root provides our bodies with a phenomenal amount of natural energy due to its high carbohydrate levels (the root is comprised of 60 percent carbohydrates, mostly in the form of starches and sugars). For this reason, many athletes use maca root powder as a replacement to anabolic steroids.

High in protein - Maca root is comprised of approximately 10 percent protein, which is as high as some vegetable seeds. Protein is needed for building and repairing tissue, among numerous other roles.

Rich in iodine - According to nutritionists, our recommended daily intake of the thyroid-regulating mineral, iodine, is 150 micrograms per day. Thanks to ongoing soil erosion, however, many people suffer from a deficiency. While sea vegetables such as bladderwrack and kelp are the undisputed kings of iodine, 10 grams of maca root contains 52 micrograms - pretty good for a land-based plant. The darker the root, the more natural iodine it contains.

Reduces cholesterol - Maca root contains a number of plant sterols such as sitosterol, campesterol, ergosterol, brassicasterol, and ergostadienol. Plant sterols are naturally-occurring molecules that closely

resemble cholesterol, and can lower 'bad' LDL cholesterol levels by interfering with cholesterol absorption in the small intestine. Consequently, maca root can guard us from atherosclerosis and other cardiovascular diseases associated with LDL cholesterol build-ups.

Natural laxative - Since maca roots are comprised of approximately 9 percent dietary fiber, they can help us improve regularity and treat constipation. Fiber is also a natural appetite suppressant, since it absorbs water from the colon which, in turn, makes us feel fuller for longer.

Trace nutrient content - Aside from its high iodine, fiber, and protein content, maca root is also rich in trace minerals such as iron, potassium, magnesium, and calcium. The average root is also comprised of two percent natural fat, which contains several important fatty acids - such as linoleic acid, palmitic acid, and oleic acid - that are needed for maintaining brain function.

Sources for this article include:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18801111>