

## Ashwagandha: The Powerful Health Benefits and Beauty Benefits You Need to Know

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Ashwagandha, the magical herb, is considered to be a nature's gift to mankind. For centuries, Ayurvedic medicine has used it to treat people for their day to day woes such as stress, anxiety, exhaustion, lack of sleep et al. And with an abundance of antioxidants, iron and amino acids, it's no surprise that Ashwagandha is one of the most powerful herbs in Ayurvedic healing. It is classified as a *rasayana* i.e. rejuvenation in Ayurveda and expected to promote physical and mental health, restore the body and increase longevity. It has been glorified over time for its dual capacity to energise and calm at the same time.

But what exactly is Ashwagandha? It is a small shrub with yellow flowers and a red fruit, native to India, North Africa, and the Middle East. The extract is typically taken from the berries or roots of the plant. The Sanskrit term Ashwagandha translates to "smell of horse", and rightly so. Traditionally, it is believed that a person who consumes this herbal medicine will gain horse-like strength and vitality. It is also referred to as *Withania Somnifera* (Latin name), Indian Ginseng or Winter Cherry. Dr Ashutosh Gautam, Clinical Operations and Coordination Manager at Baidyanath says, "Ashwagandha can be taken in the form of powder or tablet. For added benefit, it can also be put in to Kashmiri kahwa, which is a green tea. Ashwagandha has hormone balancing, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant properties which can prevent and treat a number of diseases. It is popularly used for boosting immunity, anti-ageing, joint pain and insomnia. Due to

its active ingredient called withanolides, Ashwagandha is also used as an “adaptogen” to help the body cope with daily stress, as a general tonic and for improving thinking ability. It also improves the brain’s memory functions like attention and concentration, hence helping with the symptoms of Parkinson’s, Alzheimer’s and other neurodegenerative diseases. It enables the body to reserve and sustain vital energy throughout the day while promoting sound, peaceful sleep at night.” These varied benefits are what makes Ashwagandha a go-to choice in Indian herbal medicine.

## 10 Health Benefits of Ashwagandha

1. The benefits of Ashwagandha are perfect for those battling stress, as it inhibits high levels of cortisol, ‘the stress hormone’. It is in fact used in tranquilizers and antidepressants drugs, since it helps relieve physical and mental stress and overcome depression.
2. Ashwagandha has a rich history in Ayurveda for its wound healing abilities. Traditionally, fresh leaves were used topically to heal joint pains, skin sores and to reduce swelling.
3. The results, published in the Indian Journal of Psychological Medicine show that Ashwagandha helps promote relaxation as it is a natural adaptogen.
4. In Ayurveda, Ashwagandha is referred to as *balya*, which means giving strength in conditions like general debility. It is known to improve energy, increase stamina and endurance.
5. The exotic herb is a promising alternative treatment for a variety of mental degenerative diseases because it has demonstrated an ability to promote the growth of nerve cells, and protect the brain cells from the harmful effects of the environment.



6. Ashwagandha is used as an aphrodisiac as well, since it supports sexual health.
7. It has been used for centuries as a general body tonic, as it makes you feel stronger and

healthier. It is also present in *Chyawanprash*, the delicious and famous concoction stocked up in every Indian household.

8. In addition to boosting your overall immunity, Ashwagandha also has the potential to be a serious anti-cancer agent as it slows the growth of cancerous tumors.

9. “Ashwagandha also acts on the endocrine system by encouraging hormone balance”, says Dr Ashutosh Gautam, Clinical Operations and Coordination Manager at Baidyanath. Studies suggest reduction in symptoms such as hot flashes and mood swings during menopause.

10. The rejuvenating properties of Ashwagandha make it very effective in treating insomnia. It calms the nervous system, eases stress and gets rid of sleeplessness. Traditionally, it is used as a powder mixed with honey and warm milk for calming vata and regulating your sleep and wake cycles. You can also have a cup of hot milk mixed with 1 teaspoon of powdered Ashwagandha before bedtime.



### **Beauty Benefits of Ashwagandha**

Tired of looking in the mirror at wrinkled, dry, sagging skin? It's Ashwagandha to the rescue. Its potent antioxidant properties help protect the skin against free radical damage and slow down the ageing process by firming up your skin for a more youthful look.

Skincare: Ashwagandha stimulates DHEA, which is a precursor to both testosterone and estrogen and stimulates the production of natural skin oils. It also promotes the production of vital compounds and proteins for healthy skin such as hyaluronan for skin hydration, elastin to keep the skin supple and collagen for skin strength. For glowing skin, you can also use Ashwagandha as a toner with dried ginger and lemon.

Healthy Hair: Used in shampoos, Ashwagandha is believed to help improve scalp circulation and strengthen the hair, as well as help get rid of dandruff. It also appears to stimulate production of melanin, the pigment responsible for the colour of your hair. So, it may actually reverse greying of hair. And if that wasn't enough, it also helps deal with hair loss.

Note: If you want to look younger, feel healthier, sleep better - this miraculous herb is just the ticket for you.

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