

FAST FACTS

Adaptogens

Homeostasis modulators

What

Adaptogens are compounds (typically herbal) that help the body adapt to stress, and help re-regulate immune, digestive, endocrine, and nervous systems, as well as cardiovascular function.

Common adaptogens include herbs like Ashwagandha, Rhodiola, various ginsengs (America, Asian, Siberian) and mushrooms (Cordyceps, Reishi), Schisandra, and Holy Basil.

Adaptogens are widely used in functional medicine for their ability to enhance resilience to stress, support energy levels, and promote overall well-being.

How they work

Adaptogens are somewhat unique, in that mostly they have modulatory effects, meaning instead of always stimulating or suppressing a physiological function, they can do both, thereby normalising the function. For this reason they are typically non-toxic, and safe.

Largely speaking, adaptogens help the body regulate, and adapt to stress, helping to restore balance to the nervous system. Some are more energising and supportive of cognition, while others are more calming and helpful for the likes of anxiety.

While some can be used reactively, such as in response to stress, anxiety, or an immune challenge, mostly they exert their best function when taken regularly, pre-emptively and prophylactically.

Adaptogens can be taken as supplements or consumed as teas and powders. Popular adaptogens like Ashwagandha and Rhodiola are available in capsules, tinctures, or loose herb forms.

Testing

If you're experiencing chronic stress or fatigue, adrenal function testing can assess your cortisol levels and help determine whether adaptogens may be beneficial for you.



Pros

- Adaptogens typically combine well, with small regular doses of mixed adaptogens resulting in broad function normalisation and optimisation.
- Regular use of adaptogens can support adrenal health, improve cognitive function, reduce inflammation, and enhance physical and mental endurance. For those focused on optimising health, adaptogens offer a natural, holistic solution to managing stress and improving vitality.

Considerations

- Consistency is key: Adaptogens typically need to be taken over a period of time to produce noticeable effects. Daily consumption over several weeks can lead to improved resilience to stress and overall energy balance.
- As adaptogens work subtly, it's recommended to consult with a functional medicine practitioner to determine the best adaptogen for your needs.

