

What Is Ginseng?

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What Is Ginseng?

Ginseng is a plant. Different varieties of ginseng root have been used as treatments in Asia and North America for centuries.

Ginseng is one of the most popular herbal medicines in the world.

Benefits of Ginseng

There are two main types of ginseng: Asian or Korean ginseng (*Panax ginseng*) and American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*). Studies show that different types have different benefits. In traditional Chinese medicine, American ginseng is considered less stimulating than the Asian variety.

Although many other herbs are called ginseng—like eleuthero or Siberian ginseng—they don't contain the active ingredient of ginsenosides.

Ginseng has traditionally been used for a number of medical conditions. But its benefits for most of them haven't been seriously researched. Anecdotally, the root may help you:

- Build immunity. Some studies show that ginseng may boost your immune system. There's some evidence that one particular type of American ginseng extract might lower the number and severity of colds in adults.
- Regulate blood sugar. Several studies in people have shown that ginseng may lower [blood sugar levels](#).
- Improve focus. There's some early evidence that ginseng might give a small, short-term boost to concentration and learning. Some studies of mental performance have combined ginseng with extract from leaves of the ginkgo tree, another traditional remedy said to help with [dementia](#). While these studies are intriguing, many experts feel we need more evidence.
- Reduce inflammation. Some studies suggest that ginseng may help control inflammatory diseases.

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Transcript

Asian Ginseng: Benefits, Risks Side Effects

Asian ginseng is one of the most popular herbal supplements in the world.

Ginseng has also been studied as a way to improve mood and boost endurance, as well as treat:

- Cancer
- Heart disease
- Fatigue
- [Erectile dysfunction](#)
- Hepatitis C
- High blood pressure
- Menopausal symptoms

While some of these uses are promising, the evidence isn't conclusive.

Ginseng Dosage

Standard doses of ginseng haven't been established for any condition. Quality and active ingredients in supplements may vary widely from maker to maker. This makes it hard to establish a standard dose. Most research studies suggest daily doses of 200 milligrams of *Panax* ginseng extract or 0.5-2 grams of dry root. When given as a capsule, dosages of ginseng usually range from 100-600 milligrams a day.

Always buy ginseng from a trustworthy company. Because it's an expensive root, there's a risk that disreputable manufacturers might sell ginseng with other things added in or include less than advertised on the bottle.

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Ginseng Uses

You can get ginseng as a dietary supplement in the form of tea, dried herbs, powder, or capsules.

Ginseng is sometimes also added to other, everyday products, such as toothpastes, soaps, [baby](#) foods, candies, beverages, [cigarettes](#), and gum. The form you decide to use might depend on your health needs and your personal preferences.

Ginseng root

Ginseng root comes from several plant species in the *Panax* genus family. The root is the part of the plant that's most often used for health purposes.

A ginseng root appears tan and twisted. It looks a lot like a body that has strings for arms and legs.

You can peel and chew the raw ginseng root. Another option is to soak it in wine to drink. Or you can boil the root to make into a tea.

Ginseng supplements

Ginseng is a top-selling supplement that comes in different forms. It's important to remember that the FDA doesn't regulate herbal supplements, such as ginseng. That means you might not really know exactly what's in the product you take.

As a tablet or capsule, you can take ginseng supplements by mouth with water. These pills typically contain ground-up root or extract. They may include different types of ginseng.

Ginseng root extract powder can be dissolved in different types of beverages. The powder may contain higher amounts of ginseng than the tablets or capsules.

Ginseng tea

Ginseng tea is made from the ginseng root. You can buy already-made teas or make them yourself out of roots or powder.

Ginseng herbs

Some research has suggested that ginseng dried herbs may offer more health benefits than raw ginseng. While you can dry

ginseng yourself, the process can be complicated. Prepared dried ginseng is sold at many retail stores and online.

Ginseng in Food

There are no natural food sources of ginseng. Ginseng is sometimes added to energy drinks and foods.

You can also add ginseng to:

- Soups or stews
- [Yogurt](#)
- Oatmeal
- Stir-fried dishes
- Smoothies
- Beverages such as coffee, juices, or teas

Ginseng Side Effects

Ginseng side effects are generally mild. It has been reported to cause:

- Nervousness
- [Insomnia](#)
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Upset stomach
- Skin reactions

- Allergic reactions
- Menstrual cycle changes

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To avoid side effects from ginseng, some experts suggest you shouldn't use it for more than 3 months—or sometimes just a few weeks—at a time.

Given the lack of evidence about its safety, ginseng isn't recommended for children or if you are pregnant or [lactating](#).

Interactions

Ginseng could interact with other medicines you take. Some of these include:

- Digoxin
- Morphine
- [Blood thinners](#) such as warfarin (Coumadin) or clopidogrel (Plavix)
- Diabetes medications including insulin
- Diuretics such as bumetanide, torsemide (Demadex), or [furosemide](#) (Lasix)
- High blood pressure or heart medications such as diltiazem, nifedipine, or verapamil

- Monoamine oxidase inhibitors such as selegiline (Eldepryl), isocarboxazid (Marplan), phenelzine (Nardil), or tranylcypromine (Parnate)
- Stimulants such as amphetamine and dextroamphetamine (Adderall) and [methylphenidate](#) (Concerta, Ritalin)
- Drugs that affect the [immune system](#)

You should always tell your doctor about any herbal supplements you take, including ginseng.

Takeaways

Ginseng is a popular supplement that may offer health benefits. You can buy ginseng as a pill, powder, or dried herb. It's often added to popular products, like teas, energy drinks, and candies. While ginseng is generally considered safe, you should always talk to your doctor before you try a new supplement.

Ginseng FAQs

Is ginseng the same as ashwagandha?

No, ginseng is not the same as ashwagandha. [Ashwagandha](#) is an evergreen shrub that grows in India, the Middle East, and Africa. Generally, ginseng is considered stimulating, while ashwagandha is considered calming.

Does ginseng have caffeine in it?

Ginseng does not contain caffeine. But some research has shown that ginseng could enhance the effects of caffeine. It's often added to energy drinks and teas that do contain a lot of caffeine.

Is ginseng actually good for you?

Some research has suggested that ginseng could offer health benefits, such as [improved focus](#) and better immunity. But a lot of these claims have not been heavily researched.

Is it safe to take ginseng supplements every day?

It may be safe to take ginseng every day, but some sources recommend that you take a 2-week break from ginseng every 2-3 weeks.