ASHWAGANDHA IN DIETARY SUPPLEMENT PRODUCTS

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ASHWAGANDHA IN DIETARY SUPPLEMENT PRODUCTS  
Ashwagandha (Withania somnifera) is a small shrub that grows in parts of India, the Middle East, and Africa. It is used as an ingredient in many different kinds of dietary supplement products.  
  
There is not yet enough reliable scientific evidence to support the use of ashwagandha for any specific purpose.  
  
What is ashwagandha in dietary supplements used for?  
Ashwagandha has a history of use going back more than 3,000 years in Ayurvedic (traditional Indian) medicine. Today it is commonly used in dietary supplements for conditions related to both physical and mental health, such as arthritis, diabetes, infertility, fatigue, anxiety, stress, and cognitive performance. It is also promoted as an adaptogen, which means it is used to help the body adapt to stress. Topically, it is used for things such as backaches or muscle soreness, but these products are not dietary supplements.  
  
Is ashwagandha safe or effective?  
Ashwagandha has been investigated for so many purposes that it is difficult to determine its effectiveness for any specific use, but it appears to be relatively safe for oral use (as in dietary supplements) for up to about 12 weeks. The amounts (from as little as 30 mg to more than a gram daily) and the duration of use appear to depend on the intended effect.  
  
Research continues into the various potential uses of ashwagandha and its extracts in medicine, dietary supplements, and even foods. This includes investigation into the use of withaferin A (a compound present in ashwagandha) for the treatment and prevention of cancer. However, most of the studies to date are relatively small, with inconsistent results, so more research is needed to determine its safety and effectiveness for any specific health benefit.  
  
Adverse health effects, including gastrointestinal upset, diarrhea, vomiting, and (in rare cases) liver injury, have been reported. It is also very important to note that ashwagandha could induce abortion, so pregnant women should not take it!  
  
Is ashwagandha okay for Military Service Members to take?  
Ashwagandha is not prohibited for use by Military Service Members, and it should not produce a positive result on a routine military drug screening test.