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Therapeutic effects of Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*) in ayurveda

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Ayurveda is the India's Traditional System of Medicine, originated 5000 years ago and Upaveda of Atharvaveda. Ayurveda is from two Sanskrit words Ayu (Life) and Veda (Science) hence Ayurveda is Science of Life. The Aim of Ayurveda is to protect the health of healthy and cure the illness of diseased. According to Ayurveda the physical body is made up of five elements, Panchamahabhuta. They are Prithiv (earth), Ap (water), Tejas (fire), Vayu (air), Akasha (space). Susruta defined health as the state of equilibrium of tridosha (vata, pitta, kapha-fundamental governing principles of body), agni (metabolic and digestive activity), dhatu (principles uphold the formation of body tissues), mala (waste products) and prasanna atma indriya mana (total satisfaction of soul, sense organs and mind). Agni is not only the fire but the energy behind all metabolic processes. Each person born with unique combination of doshas, stable throughout the life. Ayurveda is personalized medicine, treating the disease by understanding the prakriti (unique body type) of the person. *Withania somnifera* is considered as one of the most powerful Rejuvenating drug (rasayana). Ashwagandha is a

small evergreen shrub from Solanaceae family found commonly in India, Africa, Mediterranean. The most identifiable feature is its small red berry hence the name winter cherry or Indian Ginseng. Roots are stout fleshy, whitish brown commonly used as powdered form mixed with ghee, honey, milk or water. It is bitter, astringent, sweet taste and hot in potency. Famous Ayurveda treatise explains Ashwagandha as Balya (to increase the strength), Vajikarana (aphrodisiac), Vranaropana (wound healing), treated for rajayakshma (for emaciation), Gulma (tumour), Vataroga (anti-inflammatory, antiarthritic), Mastiska rogas, unmada, apasmara (neurological disorders), Sukrala (increases the sperm count). Withanolides is the major biochemical constituents of Ashwagandha. Studies show anti-tumour activity, reduces the ulcers caused by stress, long term use of plant reduce uterine fibroids, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's, Rheumatoid, Osteoarthritis, anti-anxiety, hepatoprotective, immunostimulatory, hypoglycaemic and hypolipidemic, impotency, insomnia.

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