

Chill Out!

When you're feeling anxious and stressed, herbal remedies can help alleviate some of your symptoms

If you're feeling anxious or stressed, there are a number of natural remedies that can support your body and minimize your symptoms associated with elevated stress.

Calcium and magnesium citrate, for example, can help relieve muscular spasms and tics, and help promote a restful sleep when taken at night. Calcium and magnesium deficiencies are seen in frequent waking and difficulties in falling asleep. Supplements of these minerals can help calm tense muscles and relieve anxiety. Calcium citrate is one of the most absorbable forms of calcium on the market.

Among other supplements, tyrosine, is an amino acid that helps decrease the effects of stress in the body while enhancing clarity and mental focus. Don't use it when taking MAO inhibitors or experiencing an overactive/hyperactive thyroid. B vitamin complex provides nervous system support, decreases anxiety, improves endurance, helps balance brain chemicals, and can help you cope with stress. S-adenosylmethionine (SAME), a natural antidepressant, also has a calming effect on the body. Don't use it if you're taking antidepressants or you're diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

Herbal medicine can help support your nervous system. Passionflower (*Passiflora incarnata*) is a nervine used to quiet the mind from constant mental thoughts and over-excitability. Skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*) is a nervous system restorative and relaxant herb used for stress, headache, anxiety, and insomnia.

Adaptogens—herbs that contain balancing, regulative, and tonic properties—essentially help to restore harmony to the whole body. The term “adaptogen” is a Russian concept based on the daily use of herbs to prevent disease and enhance an individual's current state of health. Adaptogens are particularly helpful for supporting the health of people with HIV/AIDS, cancer, autoimmune disorders, and other chronic illnesses. Adaptogen herbs are used to increase physical and mental endurance, enhance vitality, and help your body cope with stress. They also improve resistance to infection and help maintain optimal organ function. Used in conjunction with allopathic (Western) medicine, adaptogens can often minimize the side effects caused by many drugs.

Adaptogens include Siberian ginseng (*Eleutherococcus senticosus*). Known as an antistress herb, it helps the body to cope with external stress, enhances immune system function, and helps resist viruses, if you're suffering from depression or overwork. Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*) an ayurvedic East Indian herbal medicine, for building endurance and stamina, used daily as a tonic for conditions of depletion and exhaustion.

Try aromatherapy to soothe your nerves. Lavender essential oil is a balancing oil used for lack of energy during the day and to promote sleep at night. Add 5 – 6 drops to a hot bath at night to promote sleep. Rosemary and basil essential oils are gentle stimulant oils that can help promote clarity and energy throughout the day or in the morning. Use in a candle diffuser.

Your diet can also make a big difference. If you're feeling stressed, avoid all processed foods and refined sugars, artificial sweeteners, carbonated soft drinks, tobacco, and alcohol. Caffeine can trigger an attack, so take steps to avoid all stimulants, including tea, coffee, and chocolate. Hypoglycemia—or low blood sugar levels—can also trigger stress in the body. Therefore, focus on consuming small frequent meals throughout the day to help keep your blood sugar levels constant. Also eat mineral-rich foods, such as whole grains, brown rice, raw (unsalted and unroasted) nuts, fresh vegetables, and fish.

Finally, get regular exercise and practice deep breathing. One breathing exercise for alleviating anxiety: inhale through your nose to the count of four, hold your breath for four counts, then exhale to a count of six. Hold your breath for four counts, then inhale again.

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