

Questions and Answers about Maca

Q: What is Maca?

A: Maca (*Lepidium peruvianum* or *Lepidium meyenii*) is a root plant native to the highlands of Peru. It looks like a small turnip and is a cruciferous root vegetable. It is both a food and an herb and is used by native Peruvians of all ages to promote hormone balance and a healthy immune system.

Q: What is Maca used for?

A: Maca promotes healthy male and female sexual functioning, energy support and promotion of healthy estrogen and progesterone levels in both sexes.

Q: Is Maca a safe herb?

A: Maca is considered very safe by the natives of Peru who have used it for thousands of years. Native Peruvians consume Maca as part of their regular diet, and have a very low rate of breast, uterine and prostate cancer as compared to the population of the United States.

Q: What is the suggested daily intake?

A: Recommended daily dosages range from 2,000 to 10,000 mg. of pure organic premium quality Maca, divided into 2 or 3 dosages.

Q: Are there any side effects or interactions?

A: In toxicity studies conducted in the U.S., Maca showed absolutely NO toxicity and NO adverse pharmacological effects. In animal studies, the more Maca animals consumed, the stronger and more sexually active they became. Some women may experience slight breast tenderness at high doses. This is an indication to cut back on the daily dosage. There are no other known side effects.

Q: Should Maca be taken daily?

A: Maca is not replacing hormones, so it is fine to start and stop at any time without stressing the body. Some health practitioners advise not to use it continuously, but to alternate with periods of taking the supplement with periods of rest from the herb to maximize the body's response.

Q: Can one take too much Maca?

A: Not really, but keep in mind that taking a product in excessive dosages does not necessarily mean it will work faster or more effectively. Some studies have shown that taking higher levels of Maca can increase the beneficial results, but listen to your own body and seek the advice of a professional nutritionist or herbalist if you are uncertain.

Q: Can I take Maca as a preventative or only to treat health problems?

A: Maca can (and should) be used "preventatively" to help maintain the health of the body as a revitalizer, energizer, restorative, and great physical and intellectual stabilizer.

Q: Can one take Maca during pregnancy?

A: As a safety precaution, most formulators state that their supplemental products should not be taken during pregnancy because the fetus is extremely sensitive and vulnerable to disease and injury during their early developmental stage. Acute toxicity studies and cytotoxicity evaluations have demonstrated absence of any evidence of potential toxicity of Maca. No side effects have been reported in hundreds of thousands of people who have been using Maca as a supplement. Maca

contains no dangerous phyto-estrogens (such as those contained in soybean products).

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Q: How does Maca compare to other menopausal herbs like black cohosh or other women's formulas?

A: Maca provides the ingredients to support menopausal health. The herb works through the hypothalamus and pituitary to help ensure balanced and healthy hormone levels in the body. Many men and women notice the difference within a week! Maca helps promote sexual functioning, ensures vaginal lubrication and, in general, brings about all the benefits of healthy, balanced hormone levels in the body. Black cohosh and licorice root, for example, contain weak plant estrogens. Many women do not feel improvement when taking these herbs or their affects are not long lasting. For this reason, Maca is most often the preferred choice.

Q: Can Maca be taken with other non-prescription hormonal-type supplements?

A: Many people have used Maca with DHEA, pregnenolone, black cohosh, wild yam, etc., and have not experienced any negative reactions. Some people may desire to reduce their intake of the other supplements as less may be required for the desired effect.

Q: Can teenagers benefit from using Maca?

A: The benefits of Maca seem to be for individuals of all ages. The herb supports hormonal functioning in older and younger adults, and teenagers have also benefited from its effects on hormone-balancing and acne.

Maca's Hormone Balancing Effects

Women are turning to Maca for assistance during perimenopause, menopause and postmenopause. Women with menstrual irregularities using Maca have experienced greater consistency, while women with hot flashes, mood swings and most associated perimenopause and menopause symptoms have diminished dramatically using Maca.

Perimenopausal women usually need smaller amounts of Maca (about 1,500 mg. Daily), to help alleviate increased PMS and other symptoms of hormonal imbalance. Estrogen dominance is a common problem which Maca can help to correct. In addition, women who begin using Maca during perimenopause find that they have a much easier time when they enter menopause.

Menopausal women who suffer from hot flashes, mood swings, and other effects of rapidly dropping hormone levels, will find Maca to be a safe and drug-free alternative to HRT. Initially women need higher doses, such as 1 to 2 teaspoons of powder daily. Usually this dosage can be reduced after a month or two. While no single product works for everyone, results are usually excellent, and most women will notice definite relief within two to three weeks.

Many women who have tried everything from prescription HRT to phyto-estrogens without success, find that using Maca literally gives them back their life. Women who have been using any form of HRT will need to make a gradual transition from their hormonal program to using Maca. This transition may take a month or more.

Postmenopausal women do well on small to moderate doses of Maca. Even if they have not been experiencing overt symptoms of hormone deficiency, using Maca can help to slow the aging process, keeping skin youthful and preventing vaginal dryness and atrophy. Maca can also be of benefit for bone health, because of its supportive mineral content. For this reason it is used in Peru and elsewhere to treat and prevent osteoporosis. Reportedly, but not yet clinically proven, Maca users of

at least one year have seen increased spinal bone density.

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Libido

Maca's ability to help restore libido for men and women is probably what it is best known for. It is often described as an aphrodisiac for both sexes, undoubtedly because of its beneficial effect on testosterone and other hormone levels. If one were to ask most Peruvians why they recommend Maca, most will frankly answer, "For the sex, of course!"

While Maca is often compared to the drug Viagra (™), it actually works very differently in regards to its sexual effects. Viagra's effects are more circulatory, while Maca's effects are more hormonal. As an energizer, Maca helps to create more vigor for sexual activity.

Maca also helps improve sexual activity and satisfaction by increasing vaginal lubrication in women as well as increasing seminal volume (ejaculate) by 30% in men.

Maca provides a means of normalizing our steroid hormones like testosterone, progesterone and estrogen. Therefore, it facilitates balance to the hormonal changes of aging. In men, it restores a healthy functional status in which they experience a more active libido. Lots of men and women who previously believed their sexual problems were psychological are now clearly going to look for something physiological to improve quality of life in the area of sexuality.

Stress Reduction / Blood Pressure Lowering / Sleep Improving

One of the most dramatic and noticeable benefits of Maca is a reduction in stress. As a powerful adaptogen, Maca, with its natural compounds has the ability to balance and normalize the body's entire system. For example, Maca can raise low blood pressure and lower high blood pressure. Maca has a balancing effect on the hormones, and therefore, can positively effect any system in the body which is out of balance.

Many factors cause insomnia or sleep problems. Some are nutritional, some can be related to EMF (Electro-Magnetic Frequencies ... such as from cell phone towers), but most are probably related to stress. Maca may provide raw materials needed for the body to produce serotonin, which creates relaxation. As an adaptogen, it may also help lower cortisol (the stress hormone) which interferes with normal serotonin production.

Maca Popular with Athletes

Maca is often used to increase energy, stamina and endurance in athletes, while promoting mental clarity. It is used as an alternative to anabolic steroids by bodybuilders due to its richness in sterols. Maca contains substantial amounts of potassium, calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, iron and zinc. It also contains a significant amount of essential amino acids, is easy to digest and its nutrients are highly assimilable, even for those with digestive problems.

Benefits Chronic Fatigue

Maca can also help with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) and general fatigue brought on by aging and stress. Most people with CFS have adrenal fatigue, and Maca can assist in rebuilding exhausted adrenal glands. This will take time according to the degree of exhaustion of the adrenals. In some cases, noticeable increases in energy occur within a couple of weeks (especially if sodas, coffee and

How to Select Your Maca

- Look for authentic Maca root powder ... not the stem, leaves, etc., as only the root has medicinal properties.
- Buy only pure Maca from reputable companies that have knowledge and expertise in Maca. Beware of companies that cut their Maca root powder with rice flour, maltodextrin, soy lecithin, soy protein isolate, citric acid (MSG) or other harmful additives, cheap fillers and/or excipients.
- For the highest quality, look for Maca that is grown and processed following organic standards.
- Don't be misled by companies claiming they sell "The only botanically correct and true Maca species."
- Authentic true Maca is farmed at high elevation in the clean air, pure water, mineral rich volcanic soil and is exposed to harsh climate conditions typical of the Peruvian highlands. The tougher the climate, the more resistant the plant and the greater will be its medicinal efficacy.

In Summary ...

"Although Maca has gained a reputation for its ability to enhance fertility and increase a diminishing libido in both men and women, its health benefits actually go far beyond these important issues.

When treating menopause, as a replacement for HRT, Maca is my first choice. I have recommended Maca to many women for alleviating the symptoms of menopause (as well as PMS) and I have yet to be disappointed.

Healthy adrenal glands are critical in menopause as they take over many of the functions of the now waning ovaries. Because Maca strengthens the adrenals it allows the body to better cope with this natural change in life. Menopause is normal; uncomfortable menopausal symptoms are not!

Maca is especially excellent for depression and that 'out of control' feeling common to menopause! Maca not only helps reduce the physical symptoms but also the emotional distress. Sometimes within days, but usually within 2-3 weeks, women report a feeling of well-being, increased energy, and reduced menopausal symptoms.

The human body has its own wisdom and it strives for balance. When given the proper nutrients in the correct proportions it can transit through changes with ease. Maca is very safe and seems to support the body in a way that only nature can do. Maca presents us with an excellent choice to nourish and balance the endocrine system."

Carmen Mattes, Master Herbalist, Gabriola Island, B.C.