


US

Find a Therapist (City or Zip)

 Verified by **Psychology Today**

SLEEP

Is Magnolia Bark the Missing Link for Your Sleep and Health?

Magnolia can soothe, calm, and de-stress.

Posted September 13, 2018

Reviewed by Ekua Hagan



Source: Deposit Photos

If you're not yet familiar with magnolia bark, you're not alone. My patients are often unaware of this potent-with-health-benefits plant supplement.

Despite its somewhat under-the-radar status,

magnolia bark has been a powerhouse in traditional medicine for centuries. Filled with bioactive compounds that can address conditions from anxiety to inflammation, the extract of magnolia bark may play a beneficial role in healthy sleep, as well as stress reduction, weight management, memory protection, and brain health.

What is magnolia bark?

Magnolia is a flowering tree (Latin name: magnolia officinalis)

cream.

I have a number of patients who use magnolia bark in supplement form to help with their sleep, stress, and anxiety.

How does magnolia bark work?

The bark of the magnolia tree contains several natural, bioactive compounds that function as anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial, and anti-allergic agents. Among the most well-known and well-studied of these compounds are honokiol and magnolol. Magnolia bark works as an anxiolytic, helping to lower anxiety and depression and reduce stress. Magnolia bark can also act as a sedative, directly helping to facilitate sleep. (Of course, it's anti-stress capabilities also help sleep, indirectly.)

Scientists have identified several other ways magnolia bark functions beneficially in the body. Magnolia is...

A GABA booster. GABA is a neurotransmitter that exerts a calming effect. Increased GABA activity quiets excitatory neurons in the brain, helps reduce anxiety, and promotes sleep.

A powerful antioxidant. Compounds in magnolia bark act as antioxidants, lowering levels of inflammation and oxidative

ARTICLE CONTINUES AFTER ADVERTISEMENT

An adrenaline inhibitor. Research suggests that bioactive compounds in magnolia bark can reduce adrenaline, a hormone strongly associated with stress, which stimulates vigilance and alertness. Other research indicates magnolia bark may suppress unhealthy levels of cortisol, another significant stress-related hormone.

Benefits of magnolia

Sleep. I've seen magnolia bark work effectively as a sleep promoter. That's thanks to its ability to relax the mind and

[Find a sleep therapist near me](#)

Stress and anxiety. Magnolia bark has a centuries-long history in traditional medicine as a stress-reliever and anxiety-soother. Magnolia's GABA-boosting ability is one reason why. (GABA isn't only important to sleep—healthy GABA activity is also important for mood.) Another reason is magnolia's ability to activate cannabinoid receptors. I wrote recently about the calming, mood-elevating power of cannabinoid compounds, and the body's own endocannabinoid system. Studies show magnolia bark's effectiveness as an anxiolytic. One study indicates that one of the active compounds in magnolia bark—honokiol—works as effectively as the drug diazepam to treat anxiety, without the same risks of dependency or side effects.

ARTICLE CONTINUES AFTER ADVERTISEMENT

US

keeping memory and cognitive powers sharp. Magnolia bark's GABA-activating effects and its power as an antioxidant mean it may deliver natural protection for a healthy brain. Research in mice suggests bioactive compounds in magnolia bark may help reduce a form of brain cell death that is associated with Alzheimer's disease. Other research in mice shows magnolia bark's bioactive compounds can help maintain levels of acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter that helps the brain process memory and learning. Reduced levels of acetylcholine are typically present in people with Alzheimer's disease. In a study of mice with Alzheimer's, the mice that were treated with magnolia bark extract experienced rebounds to memory and reductions in the type of brain plaque linked to Alzheimer's disease.

US

...estimates, and contribute to reducing triglycerides and cholesterol.

Inflammation and pain. Magnolia bark has long been recognized in traditional and natural medicine for as an anti-inflammatory and a source of pain relief, and has been used to help alleviate joint and muscle pain, as well as headache and menstrual cramps. Research in mice shows magnolia bark can be effective in reducing pain caused by inflammation.

US

ARTICLE CONTAINS ADVERTISING

US

Interactions with medications

US

US

US

Find a Therapist

Get the help you need from a therapist near you—a FREE service from Psychology Today.



US

Atlanta, GA

Austin, TX

Baltimore, MD

Boston, MA

Brooklyn, NY

Charlotte, NC

Chicago, IL

Columbus, OH

Minneapolis, MN

Nashville, TN

New York, NY

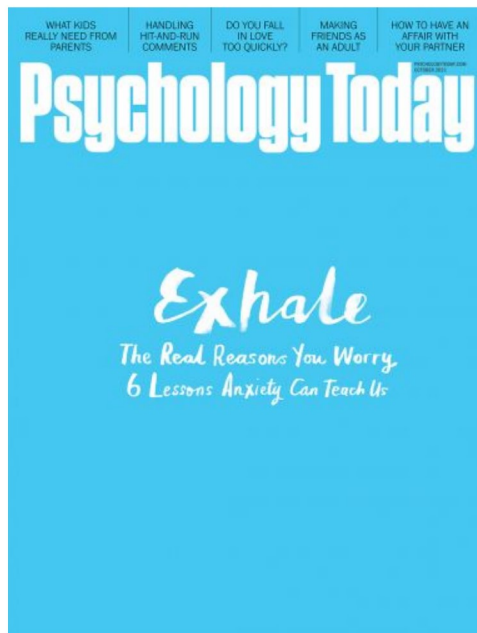
Oakland, CA

Omaha, NE

Philadelphia, PA

Phoenix, AZ

Pittsburgh, PA



[Subscribe Today](#)

[About](#)

[Editorial Process](#)

[Privacy](#)

[Terms](#)

[Accessibility](#)

US

Psychology Today © 2021 Sussex Publishers, LLC