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Licorice: An Essential Herb for Adrenal Fatigue

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Licorice – the word alone usually elicits one of two responses: yuck or yum. Regardless of how you feel about the taste of licorice, you have to agree that this divisive herb has some significant health benefits. Licorice has been shown to promote and help sustain healthy normal adrenal hormone activity, optimize cortisol, help balance sex hormones, reduce negative effects of stress on immune function, enhance sugar metabolism for energy production, and help balance mood, to name a few. In this blog we're focusing on licorice's role in supporting the HPA axis, primarily the adrenal glands.

Licorice and the HPA Axis

The herb best known for supporting [adrenal function](#) is licorice. Yes, the ingredient that gives that common black twist of candy its flavor is beneficial to the adrenal glands. Licorice is an anti-stress herb known to increase energy, endurance and vitality, and act as a mild tonic. It has been used to stimulate the hormones for anti-inflammatory action, as well as naturally fortify cortisone levels—arguably the most important hormone in stress and adrenal fatigue. Here are some specific ways licorice supports adrenal function:

- Optimizes HPA axis functions to enhance stress management capacity and cognition
- Supports healthy hormone balance and healthy normal cortisol and glucose levels

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- Promotes balanced energy, stable moods, healthy sleep cycles, fitness and sexual function

Other Benefits of Licorice

Licorice has also been used to help decrease symptoms of [hypoglycemia](#), a common side effect of decreased adrenal function. Wound healing, which can be slowed down by stress, has been improved by using licorice. Both blood circulation in the heart and arteries and production of interferon-like substances by the immune system are stimulated by licorice. Here are some other health benefits of licorice:

Digestive support

Licorice root is often used to soothe gastrointestinal problems. In cases of food poisoning, stomach ulcers, and heartburn, licorice root extract can speed the repair of stomach lining and restore balance. This is due to the anti-inflammatory and immune-boosting properties of glycyrrhizic acid, an active compound found in licorice.

Respiratory system support

Taking licorice as an oral supplement can help the body produce healthy mucus. The production of clean, healthy phlegm keeps the respiratory system functioning without old, sticky mucus clogging up the pipes.

Skin and teeth health

Licorice can be a successful dermatological treatment due to its antibacterial properties. For that reason, holistic health practitioners often suggest applying licorice to tooth decay to kill bacteria. Topical gels containing licorice are also recommended for treating eczema.

Licorice and Blood Pressure

There has been some concern that licorice increases blood pressure. This is because licorice partially blocks the conversion of cortisol into cortisone, which can produce higher amounts of circulating cortisol. Cortisol slightly increases contraction of the medial arteries and heart muscle, causing blood pressure to rise. However, you would have to consume approximately 1/4 pound of licorice candy per day in order to produce any elevation in your blood pressure. In any case, people who suffer from hypoadrenia typically have low blood pressure, so this is not usually a concern. If you're concerned, simply monitor your blood pressure after licorice use, and start off with small doses.

What if I Can't Take Licorice?

For those who are sensitive or allergic to licorice, there are alternatives. Maca, ashwagandha, and eleuthero are all great herbs to take for HPA axis support. Eleuthero has been shown to boost mental and physical endurance, heighten attention, increase tolerance, and enhance sleep under stressful conditions. Ashwagandha has been shown to counteract biological changes accompanying extreme stress that adversely affect short-

term memory, blood sugar, cortisol levels, mood, sexual function, and sleep. Maca has been shown to support and help sustain homeostasis, balance cortisol, and enhance mood and sexual function in both men and women.

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