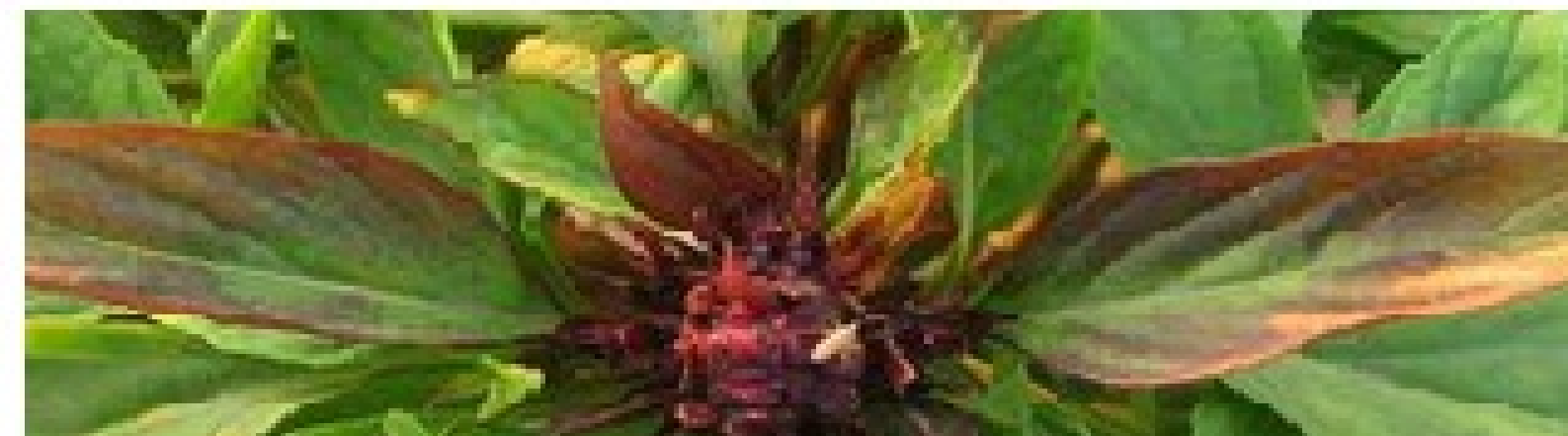




Holy basil: a key herb for stress, anxiety, depression and fatigue



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# Holy basil: a key herb for stress, anxiety, depression and fatigue

Ever since I've been helping clients to recover from **adrenal fatigue (or adrenal depletion/ exhaustion/ burnout)**, I keep researching a number of natural medicines such as herbs, nutritional supplements and nutrition-dense foods to find out which ones work best for them. As a herbalist trained in a western tradition, I mostly prescribe herbs used in the European/ North American natural medicine; however, I've also been investigating other healing systems such as Ayurveda or Traditional Chinese Medicine for their herbal medicine solutions for stress, fatigue and anxiety.

Subsequently, I came across a very interesting herb called holy basil, used successfully for thousands of years in the Orient, and started to include it in the herbal mixes with impressive clinical results.

**Holy basil (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*)** has been used medicinally in India for over 3,000 years and it's known there as the "Queen of Herbs". It has been one of India's most important healing plants throughout history. Its other name is "Tulsi" which means "incomparable one" as, according to Ayurveda, the herb also has effect on the spiritual aspects facilitating expanded states of awareness. Others call it an "elixir of life" as it promotes longevity and relaxation or a "rasayana"- a herb that nourishes a person's growth to perfect health, both physical and spiritual.

With such a rich history of traditional use and therapeutic actions I investigated it more to see how well it works for my clients as well as for myself. My clinical focus has been mainly on holy basil's anti-stress and anti-fatigue applications but of course it has flow-on effects on other body systems as they are connected and influence each other all the time.

# Holy basil: a key herb for stress, anxiety, depression and fatigue

Holy basil has a broad range of applications and indications, its main effects and benefits include:

- ○ **Endocrine system** – stress modulation/ reduction\*, fatigue\* reduction, promoting longevity\*, lowering of blood sugar levels in diabetes (type 1 and 2)\*, metabolic syndrome
- **Nervous system** – memory and cognition improvements\*, alleviates anxiety and depression, insomnia, migraine headaches, headaches, Alzheimer’s disease
- **Immunity** – systemic anti-inflammatory, infections and problems of the respiratory tract including asthma; microbial and viral infections – colds, flu, coughs; cancer prevention; lessens the side-effects of radiotherapy treatments in cancer; anti-fungal (e.g. in candida infections)
- **Cardiovascular system** – heart disease\*- known to be “good for the heart”\*, high cholesterol\*, atherosclerosis\*
- **Digestion** – ulcers (peptic, gastric and duodenal ulcers)\*, diarrhoea, flatulence, **leaky gut**, liver disease (e.g. drug/ alcohol induced liver injury)
- **Skin** – wound healing, skin infections

\*Uses verified by current research

## Stress reduction and nervous system applications

Holy basil is a relatively well-studied herb, with research that has demonstrated that it can improve anxiety and depression, and reduce stress – both physical and emotional. The exact mechanism of action is yet to be determined although research has shown that holy basil decreases the amount of cortisol released during stress without the adverse side-effects of prescription medications.

In addition, holy basil has the capacity to increase physical and emotional endurance thus increasing the resilience to all stressors. As already mentioned, it lowers blood sugar levels which in turn reduces cravings and stabilises moods, and thus facilitates weight loss. Blood sugar imbalances are common in adrenal fatigue because cortisol is involved in blood sugar management in the body.

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Holy basil has been traditionally used to support people through times of stress, working as an adaptogen (i.e. substance that balances and protects the body by improving resistance to any type of physiological or mental stress) and anxiolytic (decreasing anxiety). One of the most strongly supported actions of this herb is that of an adaptogen, with current research supporting its traditional use in managing acute and chronic stress and fatigue.

Chronic stress has been shown to increase the levels of oxidative stress and free radicals. Holy basil enhances the levels and activities of endogenous antioxidants and antioxidant enzymes including glutathione and superoxide dismutase.

In a recent randomised, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial researchers evaluated the efficacy of an extract of holy basil in the symptomatic control of general stress (1). They concluded that the effect of holy basil supplementation over placebo on comparison was considerable for all stress parameters measured. The treatment showed 39% improvement in general stress symptoms over and above the placebo. The significant finding in this study was the reduced intensity of forgetfulness, reduced symptom scores of sexual problems (stress related), and the effective relief from frequent feelings of fatigue and sleep problems.

Holy basil has also demonstrated ability to improve exercise endurance. The 2012 animal study demonstrated that after 2 weeks of supplementation (at a dose around 300mg/kg/day), the herb has protected muscles from exercise-induced injury, reduced levels of lactic acid, and extended exercise time before exhaustion (2).

The herb has been clinically trialed in treating generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) in a small, controlled 60-day clinical trial (3). The results indicated that taking the herb significantly improved anxiety, stress, depression and attention span in subjects suffering from GAD, with the greatest improvements occurring at the completion of 60 days of treatment.

Other research has indicated that holy basil has a strong antioxidant action in the brain resulting in improved memory and slower cognition decline. Free radicals have been associated with ischaemic brain lesions, development and progression of degenerative brain disorders such as Alzheimer's disease, and general decline in memory and cognition due to chronic stress.

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## Safety

Holy basil has been found to be very safe in clinical trials for short- and long-term use. However, it's not recommended for pregnancy and lactation, and it may act as a male contraceptive agent when taking in large doses – see the study summary [here](#). In vivo studies have investigated acute single doses of 2,000 mg/kg and long-term doses of 5, 50, and 300 mg/kg/day for 28 days with no morbidity and mortality or pathological changes observed (1).

## Potential drug interactions

According to the Natural Medicines Database (2016), the following are the known potential drug interactions for holy basil:

### Anticoagulant/ Antiplatelet drugs

Theoretically, holy basil seed oil might increase the risk of bleeding when combined with anticoagulant or antiplatelet drugs. In an animal model, holy basil seed oil prolongs bleeding time, possibly due to inhibition of platelet aggregation. Anticoagulant and antiplatelet drugs that might interact with holy basil seed oil include **aspirin**, **clopidogrel (Plavix)**, **dalteparin (Fragmin)**, **enoxaparin (Lovenox)**, **heparin**, **ticlopidine (Ticlid)**, **warfarin (Coumadin)**, and others.

### Pentobarbital (Nembutal)

It's a group of drugs called barbiturates. The drug slows the activity of the brain and nervous system. Pentobarbital is used short-term to treat insomnia. It is also used as an emergency treatment for seizures (source: Drugs.com)

Theoretically, combining holy basil seed oil and pentobarbital might increase the sedative effects of pentobarbital. In an animal model, holy basil seed oil increases pentobarbitone-induced sleeping time. It is not known if this occurs in humans or if this applies to other barbiturates or sedatives.

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## Dose guidelines

For general preventive therapy, the dosage range recommended in review literature is 300 mg – 2,000 mg of holy basil extract for a single dose on a daily basis. For curative therapy, 600 – 1,800 mg daily in divided doses have been used. For diabetes, 2,500 mg dried leaf powder ingested daily, or one teaspoon of the dried herb brewed daily in 1 cup of water have been used (source: [Gaia Herbs](#)).

## Sleep and adrenal fatigue

Sleeping better is one of the most underrated as well as the easiest and most simple things you CAN do to improve your health fast – starting today. There is no way to get around sleep to be and stay healthy, and there is no substitute for it. Holy basil helps with sleep disorders as well as it reduces high cortisol which is known to cause insomnia and/ or frequent awakenings during night due to the drop in blood sugar which triggers adrenaline release from the adrenal glands. It also helps to decrease anxiety about not being able to fall asleep and/ or sleep throughout the night.

Having seen many fantastic outcomes of improving sleep in my practice, I was compelled to write this short guide to give you the most important, simplest and common sense steps you can **do right now** to get sounder and more restful sleep **tonight**.

### Free guide: [Get a Good Night's Sleep Tonight!](#)

*What you CAN do today to fall asleep easier, sleep longer and wake up rested and refreshed, a step-by-step guide*

### What will you gain from this guide?

If you're currently suffering from insomnia and/ or sleep difficulties, especially if they are related to adrenal fatigue, this guide will provide you with what you need to do to sleep better. I've helped many of my clients to sleep well again, utilising the following three keys outlined in the guide:

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- **Key #1:** Nutrition for better sleep
- **Key #2:** Sleep patterns reset
- **Key #3:** Daily sleep promoting activities

Your benefits of applying the 3 keys will include:

- Sounder and uninterrupted sleep and rest
- More energy and vitality, feeling refreshed and relaxed
- Clearer thinking, feeling calmer and less stressed

Download the [Get a Good Night's Sleep Tonight! Free Guide here](#) and start sleeping better tonight!

## Summary

Holy basil proved to be a great addition to my herb dispensary and I've been successfully using it in herbal mixes for my adrenal fatigue/ exhaustion and anxious clients who also get additional benefits the herb offers such increased capacity for physical and emotional endurance, lowering blood sugar levels reducing sugar cravings and promoting safe weight loss, among others.

If you have questions or need assistance, please contact me to discuss how to start recovery from adrenal fatigue/burnout utilising powerful and effective herbs such as holy basil, rhodiola, Siberian ginseng, licorice and others; tailored supplements, as well as personalised nutrition and lifestyle changes. I look forward to assisting you towards being healthier and happier!

Please note that the above material is meant as information only. Always consult a qualified herbalist before using herbs in any form.



# Holy basil: a key herb for stress, anxiety, depression and fatigue

Be well and blessings

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