Fibromyalgia, Chronic Fatigue & Mood Disorders

A Modern Dilemma
Depression, anxiety, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia are all examples of conditions that affect the endocrine, brain and nervous systems of the body and which involve a communication breakdown on a cellular level. The numbers below represent a modern epidemic, and those numbers are growing.

The causes of chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) and fibromyalgia aren’t scientifically understood. Mood disorders, on the other hand, are influenced by several known factors. These include, among others, genetics, physical and emotional stress or injury, nutrient or sleep deficiencies, environmental toxins, endocrine and metabolic disorders and infectious diseases.

The exact causes may not be understood, but all of these conditions result in system-wide imbalances and cellular dysfunction that negatively affect the health and wellness of those afflicted.

Traditional treatments for mood disorders often include potentially dangerous pharmaceuticals, as do CFS and fibromyalgia treatments, which also often include pain-relieving drugs. Not only are these treatments insufficient in many cases, but they also carry several side effects.

What can be done? Making healthier lifestyle choices and counteracting the effects of a toxic environment are essential to reducing risk, but are only part of the answer. There also exist in nature certain medicinal plants that can help to improve the body’s natural defenses, protect against damage from the environment and enhance overall health and longevity. An especially promising healing herb has been recently discovered in the mountain rainforests of southern China. Read on to learn why scientists around the world are so excited by this natural mood balancer and energy enhancer!

Did You Know?
- More than 20 million American adults have a diagnosable mood disorder, with major depression affecting nearly 7 percent of adults in any given year.
- Anxiety disorders affect approximately 40 million Americans over the age of 18 and often occur in conjunction with depressive disorders.
- An estimated 5 million American adults are afflicted with fibromyalgia, according to the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases. Government figures estimate that as many as 4 million may suffer from chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS).

References

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What Is Jiaogulan?

Jiaogulan (pronounced jee-ow-goo-lahn), particularly the five-leaf variety scientifically known as *Gynostemma pentaphyllum*, is a part of a 5,000-year-old Chinese herbal legacy.

For generations, it was called xiancao, the “immortality herb,” because it is associated with superior health and longevity among the inhabitants of small provinces in southern China. Many are reported to live well beyond 100 years of age.

The herb is now getting worldwide attention because of emerging scientific research supporting its many diverse health benefits. In fact, there have been more than 300 scientific papers about jiaogulan published in respected journals to date.

Jiaogulan is currently used in China to prevent and treat 54 different diseases and conditions. Its demonstrated versatility in health applications is attributed to the presence of bioactive molecules called saponins. More than 9,000 studies have explored the health benefits of saponins, and experts proclaim that jiaogulan contains a broader and more powerful range of these beneficial compounds than any plant found in nature. These include unique and highly active gypenoside saponins that are found only in jiaogulan.

Jiaogulan: A Powerful Adaptogen

Jiaogulan is one of a select group of medicinal plants known to have adaptogenic properties. In other words, the herb helps the body adapt to and better protect itself under a wide range of harmful or stressful conditions.

Every time the body encounters something potentially dangerous, a non-specific stress reaction occurs in the body. The systems most affected by these reactions are the sympathetic adrenal system and the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenocortical system. Although stress responses are a normal part of bodily function and can even help enhance the body’s adaptability, chronic or excessive stress responses have the opposite effect. Over time, they result in damaging metabolic disturbances in the body that can lead to disease.

Adaptogens, especially powerful ones like jiaogulan, regulate and balance neuro-endocrine activity and buffer the body from the negative effects of chronic stressors. They offer, for instance, energy to the mentally or physically fatigued and relaxation to the agitated and anxious. The goal of an adaptogen is always to optimize body function, enhance health and prevent further imbalances.

Choosing the Right Jiaogulan Product

To experience the most benefit from jiaogulan, it is important to pick the right product. As the herb’s popularity has grown, a number of jiaogulan products have emerged, including those from countries outside China. Some of these products are of inconsistent quality and effectiveness. In fact, several hybrids of the plant have been developed to minimize the bitterness inherent in natural jiaogulan. Unfortunately, eliminating the bitter elements also reduces the number of bioactive gypenoside saponins in the plant.

For the best benefits, choose standardized high potency products made to U.S. quality standards using non-hybridized jiaogulan sourced from its original home in China. For superior absorption and results, look for a liquid full-spectrum jiaogulan tonic that is prepared from the entire plant and not just from the leaves.

Mood Balancing with Jiaogulan

Jiaogulan’s adaptogenic properties show promise in treating mood disorders such as depression and anxiety. When the body is in a chronically stressed state, adrenal glands release stress hormones that can lead to pronounced fatigue and exhaustion. In fact, dopamine, norepinephrine and epinephrine all depend on proper adrenal function, and an imbalance of any of these chemicals can cause a depressive state.

As a potent adaptogen, jiaogulan is able to modulate adrenal function and normalize stress responses. Clinical research from Japan supports jiaogulan’s usefulness in treating a number of mental and neurological conditions, including simple depression, anxiety and schizophrenia.

Jiaogulan for Chronic Fatigue and Fibromyalgia

CFS and fibromyalgia are conditions often defined by pronounced fatigue, poor sleep, impaired concentration, headaches, joint and muscle pain as well as sore throat and enlarged lymph nodes. Although conventional treatments for CFS and fibromyalgia are often lacking or ineffective, the adaptogenic properties of jiaogulan have shown promise in treating the condition.

Jiaogulan’s positive effect on energy levels is partly a result of its ability to increase the body’s production of cellular energy molecules adenine triphosphate (ATP) and creatine phosphate. The herb has also been used for centuries in China to successfully treat pain and inflammation, which are common symptoms of CFS and fibromyalgia.