

Maca Provides Benefit Following Hysterectomy

Dr. Malaspina has found maca to be effective for women with hysterectomies. He discussed a 49-year old woman who had a hysterectomy eight years ago, although she still retained her ovaries. "The woman was beginning to get menopausal symptoms - hot flashes, cold feet, depression, tachycardia, some constipation and some bone loss. Because she had breast implants, usual hormone replacement therapy was not an option for her," explained Dr. Malaspina. "I started her on maca and within three months the depression, constipation, and hot flashes cleared up. Based on my experience with some other patients, I expect that her bone density will improve as will, but that will take longer."

He has also dispensed maca to women who have undergone complete hysterectomies. One patient who had her ovaries removed was on HRT. "But she didn't feel well taking the HRT so she stopped. When I examined her the blood serum estradiol level was 15 which is very low, and she was experiencing hot flashes. Two months after she began taking maca the woman had a level of 75.

Anything above 60 is probably an adequate postmenopausal level. Maca enabled the adrenals to make sufficient hormones to avoid symptoms," he said. Dr. Malaspina adamantly prefers maca therapy to HRT. "The presence of the outside hormone circulating in the system sends a message to the pituitary and the hypothalamus that there is a sufficient quantity of hormones in the body, and so they stop producing them. When menopause arrives the ovaries are atrophied and do not produce the estrogen and progesterone which the body requires minimally to function. For this reason, I encourage women to start with maca before menopause. It seems to help the endocrine system to stay in balance."

Jorge Aguila Calderon, MD, Prescribes Maca

A Peruvian pioneer in the therapeutic application of maca integrated into a modern medical practice is Jorge Aguila Calderon, MD. An internist, Dr. Aguila Calderon is former Chief of the Department of Biological Sciences and Dean of the Faculty of Human Medicine at the National University of Federico Villarreal in Lima. Like Dr. Malaspina, he prescribes maca for a wide variety of conditions, including osteoporosis and the healing of bone fractures in the very elderly. "Maca has a lot of easily absorbable calcium in it, plus magnesium, and a fair amount of silica which we are finding very useful in treating the decalcification of bones in children and adults.

Along with prescribing an excellent diet and certain lifestyle changes, Dr. Aguila Calderon has helped patients overcome male impotence, male sterility, and female sterility by employing maca therapy. Additional problems he treats with maca are rickets, various forms of anemia, menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes and night sweats, climacteric and erectile difficulties in men, premature aging, and general states of weakness such as chronic fatigue.

American Physician Gabriel Cousens, MD, Uses Maca

Physicians in the United States believe this herb has the potential of a balanced answer to the effects of aging on the endocrine system. Many who have tried phytoestrogens and/ or precursor hormones such as DHEA or pregnenolone, or even natural hormone replacement therapy and have been dissatisfied are getting excellent results from their use of maca root. Gabriel Cousens, MD, practicing internal medicine in Patagonia, Arizona, says, "Whenever possible, I prefer to use maca therapy rather than hormone replacement therapy because HRT actually ages the body by diminishing the hormone producing capability of the glands. Maca has proven to be very effective with menopausal patients in eliminating hot flashes and depression and in increasing energy levels. To find the right dosage level, sometimes I have started the patient on maca, treatment with a half a teaspoon of powder or three capsules a day. In some cases I have raised the "dosage to a teaspoon or six capsules a day for full effectiveness."

Henry Campanile, M.D., Offers Adrenal Balancing

Maca root, in keeping with its mode of acting through the hypothalamus and pituitary, has a balancing and nourishing effect on the adrenal glands. Henry Campanile, MD, a 50-year old specialist in internal and family/complementary medicine practicing in St. Petersburg, Florida, relates: "I happen to have been born with one adrenal gland just like my father. I started taking cortisone in my late twenties to relieve the fatigue which I was already feeling. Knowing the dangers of long term cortisone use, I looked around for an alternative, and this circumstance is what got me interested in complementary medicine. I started using pregnenolone about 10 years ago and it has been fairly satisfactory. But one of my patients told me about Maca, and I started taking it about a month ago. It is phenomenal! I haven't felt this good since I was 20 years old. I have so much energy and look so well, my patients have remarked on it and told me how I seem rested. I've got so much energy now I've started an exercise program."

After trying it out on himself, Dr. Campanile began using maca with his patients. "My first patient to take the maca capsules was experiencing hot flashes and other menopausal symptoms. She started feeling much better after using this herb for only four days. I'm also employing it with patients who have low adrenal function."

Harold Clark, M.D., Makes Maca a Key Treatment

Another American doctor who has recently begun to use maca therapeutically for some patients is Harold Clark, MD, of New Rochelle, New York. Dr. Clark, who utilizes chelation therapy and ozone therapy in addition to herbs, vitamins and minerals in his practice stated, "I'm amazed at how fast maca worked on two patients that I have been concerned about for some time." He described one patient as 55 year-old Mary T, a postmenopausal, woman. Mary T was diagnosed with numerous health problems, including somewhat elevated blood sugar, hypertension, atrial fibrillation (abnormal rhythm of the heart), and hypomagnesemia (low magnesium). She had been acutely ill for two months with osteomyelitis (bone infection) and generalized sepsis. Due to all of her health issues she was unable to work, she was suffering from great fatigue and depression and over five years appeared to be feeling "worse and worse".

"Within just four days of taking the maca capsules, Mary T went through an enormous turnaround," said Dr. Clark. "She has gone out to shop in the stores; she's cleaning her house; she feels strong and vigorous; and her depression is gone."

Early Menopause and Vaginal Dryness Avoided

One young West Coast woman, Susan F, has an interesting experience to tell. After giving birth to two children, the 31-year old mother decided to use contraceptive pills for the first time. Since a possible side effect of the method she chose was not having a period, Susan F didn't think anything of its non-occurrence until six months later when she also began experiencing mood swings, hot flashes, and dry skin.

Her visit to an endocrinologist revealed that the woman's hormones were at "menopause" levels. Then Susan's mother told her that early menopause runs in the family. Her grandmother, her mother, and her older sister all had early menopause. It had been a year since her last period, and by chance her husband brought home some Maca for himself, he told his wife to try it, too, and she did.

Last June Susan F experienced resumption of menstruation once again. Her periods have been regular ever since taking the maca. Susan F also comments that her skin is now nice and moist, the way it used to be.

Diane S, a 52-year-old librarian from Rye, New York, would never consider taking estrogen because of the health risks she feared. Instead she opted for dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA) as an anti-aging hormone. This very physically active woman noticed an upsurge in her energy from ingesting DHEA but intercourse was still painful for her due to the thinning and drying of her vagina. The gynecologist she consulted about the problem told her it was a "natural part of aging that could only get worse with time." He told

Diane S that the only thing able to help would be taking estrogen. But after three weeks of taking Maca Diane reported that her vaginal lubrication was good, and vaginal dryness was no longer troublesome.

Results for a Nurse-Practitioner and Her Patients

From her White Plains, New York, clinic, nurse-practitioner Stephanie Slugger-Smith, RN, MS, says that she read an article about postmenopausal health which discussed Maca. At her clinic she offers nutritional counseling for a variety of conditions.

"I had been prescribing black cohosh, dong quai, oil of evening primrose, vitamin E and other natural remedies to women with perimenopausal symptoms. But when I began taking these remedies to help with my own hot flashes and other symptoms of approaching menopause, I didn't get the relief I needed. So I acquired a supply of maca and took it as advised. Almost immediately, my hot flashes disappeared and my energy level went up. My response to maca was surprising to my gynecologist, who insisted that I undergo a series of laboratory studies, including estrogen levels, uterine monograms and others. They all turned out normal," says nurse Sulger-Smith. "I haven't had a hot flash since the beginning of November 1997, and I feel fabulous.

When I told my patients about Maca, they tried it and found freedom from their perimenopausal and menopausal symptoms. One patient who has been taking maca for over a year had a series of bone density studies done that showed increased density in the spine," says Nurse Sulger-Smith.

Other case histories exhibit similar positive results from taking maca. In fact, most of the women taking the maca reported they were feeling less fatigue, greater energy, less susceptible to stress, and stopped experiencing hot flashes or night sweats."

Not Every Menopausal Woman Responds to the Root

Dr. Muller advises that, although the great majority of menopausal and postmenopausal women could benefit from maca therapy, it is not necessarily the answer for every woman. "First of all," she says, "you have the women whose bodies are so well balanced through a combination of good nutrition, fitness, good genes and lifestyle that they are doing just great without adding any Maca. Our company does not want to treat menopause as an illness and tell all women that they need maca therapy. Each woman is a different biochemical entity and will react in a different way to this natural life event.

"Then there is a whole group of women who have been on hormone replacement therapy for five, ten or 20 years. To a greater or lesser extent their ovaries have atrophied from receiving estrogen and other hormones supplied to them from outside for a long period of time. One physician I spoke to treated a patient who was taking HRT for eight years," Dr. Muller said. "He had her taper off over a two-week period while ingesting six capsules of Maca per day. She's been completely off HRT for about a month now, while continuing with the maca, and so far she hasn't experienced any recurrence of symptoms. But at this point, there is no consensus about the best approach. "And of course, there are always a few individuals who will show an allergic reaction or who fall into a group of women or men for whom a pituitary stimulator such as maca is contraindicated in the absence of studies that prove its safety. These groups include men with a high PSA level or a history of prostate cancer. Men using maca on a regular basis should undergo periodic PSA tests. Women with a history of breast cancer or other types of hormone-related cancer also fall into this group."

Maca as an Anti-Aging Herb for Both Men and Women

Garry F. Gordon, MD, former president of the American College for Advancement in Medicine, now Founder and President of the International College of Advanced Longevity Medicine, located in Chicago, Illinois, bases his appreciation of maca on his own experience with it. Speaking from Payson, Arizona, Dr. Gordon said, "We all hear rumors about various products like maca. But using this Peruvian root myself, I personally experienced a significant improvement in erectile tissue response. I call it nature's answer to Viagra!

What I see in maca is a means of normalizing our steroid hormones like testosterone, progesterone, and estrogen. Therefore it has facility to forestall the hormonal changes of aging," Dr. Gordon believes. "It acts on men to restore them to 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," says Dr. Gordon. "Of course, as someone interested in longevity, I'm aware that mortality comes on much sooner for those individuals whose sexual activity is diminished or nonexistent. In other words, I believe that people who engage in sex twice a week or more live longer. I've found sexual activity to be a reliable marker for overall aging."

Burton Goldberg, President of Future Medicine Publishing in Tiburon, California, whose latest book is An Alternative Medicine Definitive Guide to Cancer, is another enthusiast of maca. He says that when he tried maca he was very pleased with the results and began taking it regularly. "I'm a 72 year old man and this maca has taken 25 years off my aging sex life," declares Burton Goldberg. "That's pretty important to me!"

Dr. Garry Gordon is concerned about reproductive problems in today's world. "Society faces a huge problem of dropping sperm counts and sex hormone difficulties. But maca furnishes a nontoxic solution with no downside effects. It's a therapy that appears to offer men and women the chance for hormonal rejuvenation," concludes Dr. Gordon. "We currently live in an era in which almost everyone will be doing something to deal with the hormonal consequences of aging. And Maca is now readily available."

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