



## Valerian Root

(Time-Release)

Stock #721-1 (60 capsules)

Valerian is regarded as an effective sedative, antispasmodic and mild anodyne (pain-reliever). Valerian is indicated for use for insomnia, mild to moderate anxiety, nervousness, restlessness, emotional stress and nervous tension, premenstrual and menopausal agitation/tension, muscle pain, dysmenorrhea, intestinal colic, coughs and bronchial spasms, epilepsy, nervous cardiopathy, hyperactivity, hysteria, and migraine/tension headaches. Even the German Commission E recommends valerian for restlessness and sleep disturbances resulting from nervous conditions.<sup>1-6</sup>

Valerian is thought to reduce anxiety and insomnia by interacting with the inhibitor neurotransmitter GABA (gamma-aminobutyric acid)—GABA induces relaxation and produces a sense of tranquility and calmness. Valerian has also been shown to weakly bind to the same receptors in the brain as benzodiazepines (i.e. Xanax, Valium (diazepam), etc.),

thus causing mild sedation in the central nervous system and brain. Fortunately, although valerian demonstrates similar effects as prescription anxiolytics and sedatives, there is no evidence of dependence or addiction.<sup>1,4-9</sup>

Although the exact mechanism by which valerian works has yet to be definitively pinpointed, recent research has focused on a substance known as valerenic acid, found in the root's volatile (essential) oil. Valerenic acid has been shown to depress the central nervous system, increase drug-induced sleep, and indirectly increase levels of GABA by inhibiting the enzyme responsible for GABA catabolism (breakdown). In addition, studies show that the aqueous extracts of valerian root contain appreciable amounts of GABA, although its bioavailability has not been confirmed. Researchers have also documented the direct relaxing effects of valerian on the smooth (involuntary) muscles of the bronchial passages, gastrointestinal tract and uterus, which may contribute to the herb's sedative action.<sup>1,2,4-7,10-12</sup>

Double-blind, placebo-controlled studies have clinically proven that valerian is beneficial for a variety of sleep-disorder parameters. Research shows that valerian significantly decreases sleep latency (the time required to fall asleep), reduces the frequency of night-time awakenings, decreases night-time motor activity and restlessness, and improves sleep quality, especially with elderly poor sleepers. One study, involving individuals with insomnia, showed that 44% of those receiving the valerian preparation reported perfect sleep, while 89% reported improved sleep. In addition, a double-blind study published in *Planta Medica* found that valerian was as effective for reducing sleep latency as small doses of barbituates or benzodiazepines.<sup>1,2,4-6,13-17</sup>

Additional research studies indicate that valerian exerts weak anticonvulsant effects, which may explain its earlier folk use for epilepsy. These studies further document valerian's antispasmodic, anti-arrhythmic and hypotensive (blood pressure-lowering) effects, as well as its ability to produce coronary dilation.<sup>2,5-7</sup>

German researchers have also studied the effects of valerian for the treatment of psychosomatic and behavioral disorders in children. A study involving 120 children experiencing symptoms of hyperactivity, fear, restlessness, sleeplessness, headaches and constipation, achieved excellent results among 73% of the group using a standardized valerian preparation (containing a blend of the herb's active constituents).<sup>5</sup>

There are no side effects reported with valerian use—even 20 times the recommended dose is nontoxic; however, too large a dose may cause excitability. Unlike benzodiazepines such as Valium and Xanax, valerian does not appear to potentiate the effects of alcohol, nor does it affect coordination or driving ability or cause morning drowsiness. In fact, valerian is classified as a non-addicting sedative that may actually prove beneficial during withdrawal from alcohol, cocaine or opiates. Nevertheless, valerian should not be used in conjunction with prescription sleep-aids or anxiolytics. Furthermore, although the German Commission E monograph lists no contraindications for the use of valerian during pregnancy and lactation, other sources recommend against its use until further research is done.<sup>1,2,4,5,7-10</sup>

Researchers recommend using a valerian extract that is standardized to contain at least 0.5% essential oil or 0.8% valerenic acid. It is important to note that a recent study (1997) suggests that some individuals may need to continue valerian use for 2 to 4 weeks before achieving effective results.<sup>1,6-8,10,13</sup>

Each two tablets of NSP's Time-Release Valerian provides 1,000mg of valerian root extract, standardized to contain 0.8% valerenic acids.

References:

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