

## Valerian

This fact sheet provides basic information about the herb valerian—common names, uses, potential side effects, and resources for more information. Valerian is a plant native to Europe and Asia; it is also found in North America. Valerian has been used as a medicinal herb since at least the time of ancient Greece and Rome. Its therapeutic uses were described by Hippocrates, and in the 2nd century, Galen prescribed valerian for insomnia.

**Common Names**—valerian, all-heal, garden heliotrope

**Latin Name**—*Valeriana officinalis*

### What It Is Used For

- Valerian has long been used for sleep disorders and anxiety.
- Valerian has also been used for other conditions, such as headaches, depression, irregular heartbeat, and trembling.

### How It Is Used

The roots and rhizomes (underground stems) of valerian are typically used to make supplements, including capsules, tablets, and liquid extracts, as well as teas.

### What the Science Says

- Research suggests that valerian may be helpful for insomnia, but there is not enough evidence from well-designed studies to confirm this.
- There is not enough scientific evidence to determine whether valerian works for anxiety or for other conditions, such as depression and headaches.
- Recent NCCAM-funded research on valerian includes studies on the herb's effects on sleep in healthy older adults and in people with Parkinson's disease.

### Side Effects and Cautions

- Studies suggest that valerian is generally safe to use for short periods of time (for example, 4 to 6 weeks).
- No information is available about the long-term safety of valerian.
- Valerian can cause mild side effects, such as headaches, dizziness, upset stomach, and tiredness the morning after its use.
- Tell your health care providers about any complementary and alternative practices you use. Give them a full picture of what you do to manage your health. This will help ensure coordinated and safe care.

## Sources

Office of Dietary Supplements and National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine. *Questions and Answers About Valerian for Insomnia and Other Sleep Disorders*. Office of Dietary Supplements Web site. Accessed at <http://www.ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/valerian.asp> on July 10, 2007.

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## For More Information

Visit the NCCAM Web site at [nccam.nih.gov](http://nccam.nih.gov) and view:

- *What's in the Bottle? An Introduction to Dietary Supplements* at [nccam.nih.gov/health/bottle/](http://nccam.nih.gov/health/bottle/)
- *Herbal Supplements: Consider Safety, Too* at [nccam.nih.gov/health/supplement-safety/](http://nccam.nih.gov/health/supplement-safety/)

## NCCAM Clearinghouse

Toll-free in the U.S.: 1-888-644-6226

TTY (for deaf and hard-of-hearing callers): 1-866-464-3615

E-mail: [info@nccam.nih.gov](mailto:info@nccam.nih.gov)

## CAM on PubMed

Web site: [nccam.nih.gov/camonpubmed/](http://nccam.nih.gov/camonpubmed/)

## NIH Office of Dietary Supplements

Web site: [www.ods.od.nih.gov](http://www.ods.od.nih.gov)

## NIH National Library of Medicine's MedlinePlus

Valerian Listing: [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/patient-valerian.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/patient-valerian.html)

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