Valerian has been used for millennia for its sedative, anxiolytic and antispasmodic effects. I find it most useful for insomnia with anxiety, especially if the person’s face and tongue are pale. It can help to reduce long sleep latency and improve sleep quality. Do not use Valerian with patients who show overt heat signs (red head, hypertension, red eyes). I prefer to use it with other sedatives and nervines (Hops, Passion Flower, Zizyphus seed/Suan Zao Ren, Chamomile or Scullcap) as it is less likely to cause over-stimulation or grogginess and it is more effective. In many of the positive clinical trials of Valerian, it was paired with another nerve or sedative herb such as Hops, Lemon Balm or Kava (Taavoni, et al, 2013; Dimpfel & Suter, 2008; Koetter, et al., 2007; Muller & Clement, 2006; Wheatly, 2001). In clinical trials where it was used by itself it has been uneven in its efficacy. There are a number of RCT where it was not effective, while in others it improved sleep in postmenopausal women (Taavoni, et al, 2011) and in people suffering from insomnia (Ziegler, et al, 2002). It is also beneficial for anxiety (Cropical, et al, 2002), muscle cramps, restless leg syndrome, (Cueller & Ratcliffe, 2009), neuralgias, nervous headache (use it with Betony, Passion Flower or Motherwort), nervous tachycardia and petit mal seizures (use it with Scullcap, Lobelia, Gastrodia/Tian Ma and Blue Vervain). In a clinical trial children with mild ADHD were given Valerian and Lemon Balm. Over seven weeks symptoms such as lack of attention, hyperactivity and impulsiveness decreased significantly (Gromball, et al, 2014).

It is very useful for stress-induced GI symptoms such as IBS, nervous diarrhea and stress-induced constipation. I use it with Chamomile, Hops or Catnip for stress-induced digestive upset and intestinal cramping. In a RCT, Valerian helped to relieve menstrual cramps (Mirabi, 2011) and in a second study it reduced the number and severity of menopausal hot flashes (Mirabi and Mojab, 2013).

To reduce drug withdrawal symptoms, use Valerian with Fresh Oat, Chaste Tree, Bacopa, Chinese Polygala and Scullcap. It can help relieve some of the irritability, insomnia (Poyares, et al, 2002) and anxiety associated with heroin, oxycontin, cigarette or caffeine withdrawal.

## Secondary Uses

Valerian/Lavender/Chamomile baths are relaxing and can enhance sleep, relieve muscle pain and reduce anxiety. Muscle spasms and tics (liver wind) as well as renal colic (use it with Kava, Hydrangea and Black Cohosh) can be treated with Valerian.
**Dosage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tea (Infusion)</td>
<td>1/2 tsp. recently dried root, 8 oz. hot water, steep covered for 1 hour, take 4 oz. 2-3x/day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tincture (1:2)</td>
<td>60% ETOH Dose: 1.5-3 mL (30-60 gtt.) TID/QID</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triune</td>
<td>1/6 - 1/9 part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capsules</td>
<td>1-2 500 mg capsules in the evening.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Preparations**

The older the dried root, the stronger the odor and the less effective it is medicinally.

**Contraindications & Drug Interactions**

Large doses of Valerian can leave some people feeling groggy in the morning. Valerian may possibly potentiate sedatives, antispasmodics, alcohol and narcotics (theoretical).

A small number of people have an idiosyncratic effect from Valerian and become over-stimulated rather than sedated. Avoid using it in people who have liver fire signs (red head, ears, face or eyes), those with hypo- or hyperthyroidism, and people with parasympathetic NS dominance (small, contracted pupils), as they seem to be more prone to experiencing the stimulating effect (clinical observations by the author and Steven Horne, RH(AHG)).

In an animal study, Licorice given concurrently with Valerian potentiated its anxiolytic effects (Bhatt, et al, 2013). In another animal study, standardized Valerian extract significantly decreased CYP3A4 expression and could possibly provoke an herb/drug interaction with pharmaceuticals metabolised via this pathway (Bogacz, et al, 2014). A review of numerous in vitro and in vivo studies concluded that evidence of clinically relevant interactions was non-existent and the potential of such interactions was minimal (Kelber, et al, 2014).

**Special Notes**

*V. stichiensis* (Sitka Valerian), *V. edulis* (edible Valerian), *V. occidentalis* (western Valerian)

Valerian affects cats very much like Catnip does.

**Additional Resources & References**


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