

Ginseng (“man-root” in Chinese) is a green, perennial herb that is grown primarily for its root. While many products may be referred to as ginseng, in botanical terms, there are only two authentic types: Ontario Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) and Asian Ginseng (*Panax ginseng*). These ginsengs differ from each other in their chemical composition and each has distinct biological properties.

**Ontario Ginseng
Growers Association**

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Ontario Ginseng
Health and Well-Being: Grown in Ontario



Rooted in Nature

Hundreds of scientific studies have been published in medical journals over the past four decades, examining the health benefits of Ontario Ginseng, including:

- **Stress Reduction**
- **Enhanced Blood Circulation**
- **Memory/Learning Improvement**
- **Blood Pressure Regulation**
- **Control of Blood Sugar Levels**
- **Inhibition of Blood Clots**
- **Control of Cholesterol Levels**
- **Increased Physical Stamina**
- **Stimulation of Immune System**
- **Improved Vision, Hearing**
- **Slowing of Aging Process**
- **Improved Male Fertility, ED**
- **Cancer Prevention**
- **Improved Post-Menopausal Symptoms**

The unique quality, taste and medicinal properties of Ontario's ginseng have made Canada the world's largest grower of *Panax quinquefolius* in recent years. More than two-thirds of the root is grown in Ontario. With about 220 growers and more than 6,000 acres under cultivation, Ontario harvested approximately four million pounds of ginseng in 2005. Growing ginseng involves very precise farming practices. Ontario's producers have set production standards that are being copied globally, but have yet to be matched.

Ginseng has been a traded commodity in Ontario since 1716. For centuries, it has been used to support health and vitality. Ontario ginseng is available in a number of forms: dried root, powdered extracts (capsules), tinctures, powdered root (loose or capsules), and teas or infusions.

Benefits Rooted in Science

Recently, Canadian Pharmacist of the Year 2006, Farid Wassef, RPH, BSc Pharm, CCN, developed a timely lesson on Ontario Ginseng as an over-the-counter herbal category; and how pharmacists can counsel patients effectively. Recent surveys show that over six million North Americans consume ginseng on a regular basis.

As a result of Wassef's research, he concludes that Ontario ginseng, *Panax quinquefolius*, is likely to be effective in preventing and improving recovery for individuals who are under mental and/or physical stress. Moreover, it may enhance the capacity for mental work and physical activity and improve the overall sense of well-being.

There is a growing body of evidence to show that Ontario Ginseng has a profound pharmacological effect on both the cardiovascular and immune systems. However, Wassef concludes that, as of yet, there is insufficient data from trials to recommend it in the treatment of cardiovascular disease or for the prevention and survival of common cancers.

The most studied effects of Ontario Ginseng are on the endocrine and nervous systems. While it is clear it can increase the body's ability to deal with stress, it has yet to be established in large, well-controlled studies that regular use may prevent or halt the progression of any age-related disease.

Ginseng and Adult-Onset Diabetes

Wassef establishes that the best evidence for Ontario Ginseng use is in the management of adult-onset diabetes. Recent medical research by Toronto's Dr. Vladimir Vuksan and his team, published in the August 2005 issue of *Hypertension*, disputes earlier findings of the effect of ginseng on high blood pressure, or hypertension. Their study showed that Ontario Ginseng has a neutral effect on blood pressure in hypertensive individuals. Hypertension, which afflicts over 20 percent of Canadians and almost one billion individuals worldwide, is a serious risk factor for cardiovascular disease, which accounts for the majority of deaths in Canada. In 2002 (the latest year for which Statistics Canada has data), cardiovascular disease accounted for almost 75,000 Canadian deaths.

Vuksan's team used an acute study design similar to that used in the evaluation of new blood pressure medications. None of the Ontario ginsengs studied or their mean differed from the placebo in their effect on overall mean blood pressure change. Vuksan concluded the findings suggest that Ontario Ginseng exerts a neutral acute effect on blood pressure in hypertensive individuals.

Overall, hypertensive individuals who choose to consume Ontario Ginseng should be aware of its neutral effect on blood pressure, its overall safety and its potential to interact with warfarin (a blood thinner). Dr. Vuksan and his team plan to look at the effect of chronic consumption of Ontario Ginseng on long term changes in blood pressure before they form recommendations for its use with hypertensive patients.

As well, a specific patented extract derived from *Panax quinquefolius*, known as CVT E002, has emerged as a clinically useful adjuvant (a drug that modifies the effect of another drug) in the management of viral respiratory-tract infections.

Future Benefits Rooted in Research

The ginseng growers of Ontario are investing more and more in scientific research into the medical and health uses for ginseng. While people have taken it for years—intuiting its benefits—without having its effects substantiated by medical studies, the Ontario Ginseng Growers Association felt it was time to explore further and document the benefits of Ontario Ginseng. As mentioned, initial studies have been completed with Dr. Vladimir Vuksan of St. Michael's Hospital and the University of Toronto, with additional studies to follow in the beneficial influence of Ontario Ginseng on Type 2 diabetes. Additional research into diabetes mellitus and other diseases is being funded by the Ontario Ginseng Growers Association.

For a complete bibliography of recent scientific research, visit www.ontarioginseng.com.