Yohimbe

This fact sheet provides basic information about yohimbe—common names, what the science says, potential side effects and cautions, and resources for more information.

**Common Names**—yohimbe, yohimbe bark

**Latin Name**—*Pausinystalia yohimbe*

The yohimbe tree is a tall evergreen that is native to western Africa. The bark of the tree contains a chemical called yohimbine. The amount of yohimbine in dietary supplements may vary; some yohimbe products have been found to contain very little yohimbine. A drug form of yohimbine—yohimbine hydrochloride—has been studied for erectile dysfunction.

Yohimbe bark has traditionally been used in Africa as an aphrodisiac (to increase sexual desire). Currently it is used as a folk or traditional remedy for sexual dysfunction, including erectile dysfunction in men.

As a dietary supplement, the dried bark of the yohimbe tree is made into tea and taken by mouth. An extract of the bark is also put into capsules and tablets.

**What the Science Says**

- It is not known whether yohimbe is effective for any health condition because clinical trials have not been conducted on the bark or its extract.

**Side Effects and Cautions**

- Yohimbe has been associated with high blood pressure, increased heart rate, headache, anxiety, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, tremors, and sleeplessness. Yohimbe can be dangerous if taken in large doses or for long periods of time.
- People should not combine yohimbe with monoamine oxidase (MAO) inhibitors as effects may be additive. Yohimbe should be used with caution when taken with medicines for high blood pressure, tricyclic antidepressants, or phenothiazines (a group of medicines used mostly for mental health conditions such as schizophrenia).
People with kidney problems and people with psychiatric conditions should not use yohimbe.
Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should not take yohimbe.
Tell all your health care providers about any complementary health practices you use. Give them a full picture of what you do to manage your health. This will help ensure coordinated and safe care. For tips about talking with your health care providers about complementary and alternative medicine, see NCCAM’s Time to Talk campaign at nccam.nih.gov/timetotalk/.

Sources

For More Information
Visit the NCCAM Web site at nccam.nih.gov and view Using Dietary Supplements Wisely (nccam.nih.gov/health-supplements/wiseuse.htm).

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

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NIH Office of Dietary Supplements
Web site: www.ods.od.nih.gov

NIH National Library of Medicine’s MedlinePlus

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