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Ashwagandha is a shrub cultivated in India and North America whose roots have been used for thousands of years by Ayurvedic practitioners. Ashwagandha root contains flavonoids and many active ingredients of the withanolide class. Several studies over the past few years have indicated that ashwagandha has anti-inflammatory, anti-tumor, anti-stress, antioxidant, mind-boosting, immune-enhancing, and rejuvenating properties. Historically ashwagandha root has also been noted to have sex-enhancing properties. Researchers from Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi, India, have discovered that some of the chemicals within ashwagandha are powerful antioxidants. They tested these compounds for their effects on rat brain and found an increase in the levels of three natural antioxidants — superoxide dismutase, catalase and glutathione peroxidase. They say, "These findings are consistent with the therapeutic use of ashwagandha as an Ayurvedic rasayana (health promoter). The antioxidant effect of active principles of ashwagandha root may explain, at least in part, the reported anti-stress, cognition-facilitating, anti-inflammatory and anti-aging effects produced by them in experimental animals, and in clinical situations."