

ADAPTOGENS – our nutritional heroes.

(For Sunriders only)

By Dr. Van Beveren

There has been some confusion amongst us as to what constitutes an adaptogen and whether Dr Chen uses adaptogens or actually formulates them. Rest assured - he does both.

The popular definition of an adaptogenic is a "substance which increases the body's resistance to stress" - a good beginning but somewhat inadequate. If this definition were adapted we would have to include isolated fractions such as N,N-Dimethylglycine, Co-enzymeQ10, Ascorbic Acid, etc. These isolates only comprise a limited amount of atomic structural information and restricts the public to only a small fragment of the adaptogenic components as opposed to the entire molecular entity. The Chinese symbol for medicine (*) is really a combination of two symbols. One meaning "plant" (+) and the other "enjoy" (A). To translate it literally this two-part symbol means "plant which brings enjoyment". Yet the words "plant" and "enjoy" are scarcely the terms that first come to mind when we hear the word "medicine". Instead we are likely to think of "drugs" - from the term "to drag". Imagine how far we have strayed from this original Chinese concept and how far we have strayed from the wise and famous words of Hippocrates - the Father of Medicine himself - who said "let food be thy medicine". He may as well have said -"let foods help you adapt". Foods such as Garlic, Alfalfa (literally "the father of foods"), Suma and Yucca.

Certainly, we'd all agree that using food as our medicine, whenever possible, would be much more enjoyable than the billions of dollars worth of prescription and over-the-counter drugs we as a nation, as a world, consume annually. What we need to do is "adapt" our way of thinking and recognize the alternatives we have at our disposal in our search for health and longevity. And what better way to adapt than with "adaptOgens"?

The term adaptogen is probably unfamiliar to some of you. Historically speaking it is relatively new - having first been coined by a Russian scientist, N.y. Lazarev, in 1947. While substances which can be classified as adaptogens have been used on the earth for thousands of years it wasn't until 1968 that the Russian Israel I, Breckman MD, (considered the "father" of adoptogens and student of Dr. Lazarev) popularized their use among Russian Olympic athletes and "adaptogens" became a household word. The entire concept of adaptogens grew out of the belief that even in this high-tech age where science is king, Nature can still provide a consistency, a superiority, a degree of quality that laboratories and assembly lines simply cannot attain. Nature provides certain plants that help the body adapt and cope with *dy-stress* - fast becoming one of the most dreaded words in our vocabulary today.

Thus by definition an adaptogenic substance is one which:

- A) is non-toxic and completely safe for ingestion by animals including humans, Harmless; thus they cause minimal to no "side" effects.
- B) helps to normalize body function; thus they increase the body's overall defense function by a wide range of actions rather than by a single specific action;
- C) increases resistance to various adverse factors; thus it restores balance to all the major and minor bodily systems while aggravating none. It preserves a dynamic homeostasis and when combined with other plants builds on their therapeutic attributes to offer a synergistic and/or symbiotic effect.
- D) works for a sustained period of time - when needed - unlike a drug which continues to work even after a state of normalcy is achieved creating a scattering of effects that often overshadow the original problem.

The point is that adaptogens may vary intra-individually, as well as inter-individually and that they are designed to adapt to specific needs at a given time - and then quit. The Chinese have a saying that "the whole is only as strong as the sum of its parts". Therefore, it is counterproductive to treat only the illness or its symptoms; we should treat the body as a whole. This is what adaptogens do - this is their claim to fame. This is a most important aspect of *the Sunrider Philosophy of Regeneration*. Dr Chen not only *liberally uses adaptogens* in his formulas but *he also formulates them*. Just look at NuPlus, Quinary, Calli and Fortune Delight! (sorry, I just can't type Fortune Delight! without the I). Stevia is one of the most important adaptogens as well as Korean & Siberian Ginseng, Bee Pollen, Wheat Germ, Parsley, Dandelion Powders and others.

A huge advantage in using adaptogens versus isolated (drug) fractions is that no prescriptions are necessary. They are truly the answer to those who ask how they can bypass the doctor, the hospital and the drug store. If you want to lessen the deleterious effects of any drugs you are currently taking you can do no harm by adding adaptogens. They are completely and utterly user-friendly - no IV's, tubes, needles, syringes, high-tech equipment or professional expertise is required. They are safe, less costly than the vast majority of drugs, not habit-forming or addictive and definitely not toxic.

In general adaptogens work by:

- 1) supporting adrenal function and thus counteracting the debilitating effects of dy-stress;
- 2) multiplying the concentration of enzymes that help produce energy in the mitochondria of each cell;
- 3) helping cells to eliminate waste by-products of common and normal metabolic processes - is another important function and by:
- 4) increasing protein biosynthesis they provide an anabolic effect that helps to build, nourish and maintain muscle and other tissues;
- 5) raising antibody titers and elevating enzyme synthesis by "natural" immunization (through childhood ailments) thereby maturing and stimulating the defense system and endocrine glands. More importantly adaptogens:

6)help the body use oxygen more efficiently and enhance the regulation of biorhythms.
7)quenching free radicals so as to slow down and prevent oxidizing pathology;
8)improving the latitude of the senses - thus providing a practical physiological benefit to higher awareness of our surroundings and ultimately, spiritual concepts. 9)providing a dynamic equilibrium to heat, cold, barometric pressure, ultraviolet, ionizing, cosmic & other types of radiation, motor activity, hyper-hypo functions, etc. 10)saving in us from mutation (as much as humanly possible) by preservation of the Given Original Design - the first blueprint - our genetic code.

Adaptogens are slowly replacing "robotants" - strengthening substances and alteratives (which improve the processes of nutrition and repair). We now know that the substances we now define as having adaptogenic features combine at least some if not all of the major functions of the tried and proven "robotants", "alteratives" and "tonics".

The majority of the research and the 80 plus major studies on adaptogens were conducted in the now defunct Soviet Union where, ironically, there was much more encouragement on this type of work than in the USA. There scientists first classified them as "primary" and "secondary" adaptogens.

The primary adaptogens are the most powerful and come closest to their strict definition of adaptogens. They are eleuthero, (It was Siberian Ginseng that prompted Lazarev to coin the term), Schizandra (chinensis), Reishi (ganoderma lucidum, Bee Pollen, Acidophilus, Royal Jelly, Aloe, and several others.

"Secondary" adaptogens may actually be primary but have not been studied enough to be defined as primary. Examples are Ashwaganda (withania somnifer), Gotu kola (centeel asiatic), Wild Oats (aven sativa), Astragalus or Huang Chi (astragalus membranaceous, To-Ti or Ho Shou Wu (polygonum multiflorim), Burdock (articum lappa) and Suma (pfaffia paniculata). Others, I'm sure are waiting in the wings. There is great (but mostly friendly) controversy among herbal scientists as to which plants belong in which class and we sincerely doubt that there will ever be total agreement!

A list of single adaptogenic herbs that most herbal clinical scientists agree should be used by most people on the planet at least some of the time - if not on a daily basis is available. I will try to write about each one of these herbs if and when time permits. There is also a limited list that only hints at what's available at this time in some of the more esoteric "adaptogens" (that do not fit the classic definition but are highly priced by certain cultures) such as rhinoceros horn, elephant tusks, etc. These are not backed by scientific laboratory studies but have folklore, myth and tradition to sustain them. Chicken soup (euphemistically known as "Jewish Penicillin") used by grandmothers all over the world, especially when spiced with Ginseng, is actually gaining strong scientific credibility!

Adaptogenic plant-foods are everywhere around us but adaptogenic herbs far and few between. Naturally, like any good adaptogen, these food-grade and sometimes medicinal herbs are, or at least should be pure, natural and unsprayed - like the herbal foods Sunrider uses. They are "medicines" in the true sense of the Chinese definition in that they are "plants which bring enjoyment".
I hope this helps.

Sincerely,
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