

Adaptogenic

A substance that increases the body's resistance or adaptation to physical, environmental, emotional or biological stressors and promotes normal physiological function

Adrenal Tonic

A substance that improves the tone, histology and function of the adrenal glands (especially the cortex)

Alterative

See Depurative

Analgesic

A substance that relieves pain

Anaphrodisiac

A substance that reduces libido (usually in males)

Anodyne

See Analgesic

Antacid

A substance that counteracts or neutralises acidity in the gastrointestinal tract

Anthelmintic

A substance that kills or assists in the expulsion of intestinal worms

Antiallergic

A substance that tones down the allergic response, often by stabilising mast cells

Antiandrogenic

A substance that inhibits or modifies the action of androgens (male sex hormones)

Antianaemic

A substance that prevents or corrects anaemia (that is a reduction in the number of circulating red blood cells or in the quantity of haemoglobin)

Antiarrhythmic

A substance that prevents or is effective against arrhythmias (that are any variation from the normal rhythm or rate of the heart beat)

Antiasthmatic

A substance that prevents or relieves asthma attacks

Antibacterial

A substance that inhibits the growth of bacteria (bacteriostatic) or destroys bacteria (bactericidal)

Anticariogenic

A substance that reduces the incidence of dental caries (tooth decay)

Anticatarrhal

A substance that reduces the formation of catarrh or phlegm (pathological mucus secretion)

Anticoagulant

A substance that reduces the rate of blood coagulation

Anticonvulsant

A substance that tends to prevent or arrest seizures (convulsions)

Antidepressant

A substance that alleviates depression

Antidiabetic

See also Hypoglycaemic

A substance that alleviates diabetes or the effects of diabetes

Antidiarrhoeal

A substance that alleviates diarrhoea

Antieccchymotic

A substance that prevents or alleviates bruising

Antiemetic

A substance that reduces nausea and vomiting

Antifibrotic

A substance that reduces the excessive formation of fibrous connective tissue, eg in scleroderma

Antifungal

A substance that inhibits the growth of or destroys fungi

Antihaemorrhagic

A substance that reduces or stops bleeding when taken internally

Antihyperhidrotic

A substance that reduces excessive sweating

Anti-Inflammatory

See also Antiallergic, Antirheumatic, Antiedematous, Immune depressant
A substance that reduces inflammation

Antilithic

A substance that reduces the formation of calculi (stones) in the urinary tract

Antimicrobial

See also Antibacterial, Antifungal, Antiparasitic, Antiviral, Antiprotozoal

A substance that inhibits the growth of or destroys micro-organisms

Antiobesity

A substance that assists in the reduction of body weight

Antioedematous

A substance that prevents or alleviates oedema (fluid retention)

Antioxidant

A substance that protects against oxidation and free radical damage

Anti-PAF

A substance that inhibits the activity of platelet activating factor (PAF). (PAF is a potent inflammatory agent and inducer of systemic anaphylactic symptoms)

Antiparasitic

A substance that inhibits the activity of or kills parasites, especially protozoa

Antiplatelet

A substance that reduces platelet aggregation (and hence prolongs bleeding time and may prevent thrombus formation)

Antiprostatic

A substance that reduces symptoms from the prostate gland

Antiprotozoal

A substance that kills protozoa or inhibits their growth and activity

Antipruritic

A substance that relieves or prevents itching

Antipsoriatic

A substance that tends to relieve the symptoms of psoriasis

Antipyretic

A substance that reduces or prevents fever

Antirheumatic

A substance that prevents or relieves rheumatic symptoms

Antiseptic

See *Antimicrobial*

Antispasmodic

See *Spasmolytic*

Antithyroid

A substance that reduces the activity of the thyroid gland

Antitumour

A substance that has activity against a malignant tumour

Antitussive

A substance that reduces the amount of severity of coughing

Antiulcer

A substance that prevents or relieves ulceration (usually in the gastrointestinal tract)

Antiuraemic

A substance that reduces the levels of urea in the blood (especially in kidney failure)

Antiviral

A substance that inhibits the growth of or destroys viruses

Anxiolytic

A substance that alleviates anxiety

Aperient

See *Cathartic*

Aphrodisiac

A substance that stimulates sexual desire or libido

Aromatic Digestive

A substance that is generally pleasant tasting and/or smelling that assists digestion. They are warming to the body and are also known as warming digestive tonics

Astringent

A substance that causes constriction of mucous membranes and exposed tissues, usually by precipitating proteins. This has the effect of producing a barrier on the mucus or exposed surfaces

Bitter Tonic

Also known as a *Bitter*. See also *Gastric stimulant*.

A substance that is bitter tasting and stimulates the upper gastrointestinal tract via the bitter-sensitive taste buds of the mouth and/or by direct interaction with gastrointestinal tissue. Bitters have a promoting effect on all components of upper digestive function, namely the stomach, liver and pancreas. In addition to appetite and digestion they improve general health and immune function.

Bladder Tonic

A substance that improves the tone and function of the bladder and reduced postvoid residual urine

Bronchospasmolytic

A substance that reduces spasm in the lower respiratory tract

Cancer Preventative

See also Antitumour

A substance that prevents the incidence of cancer

Cardioprotective

A substance that protects cardiac tissue against hypoxia (oxygen deficiency) and decreases the risk of heart damage

Cardiotonic

A substance that improves the force of contraction of the heart

Carminative

A substance that relieves flatulence and soothes intestinal spasm and pain, usually by relaxing intestinal muscle and sphincters. They are also added to herbal formulations to ease the intestinal spasm or pain that may be caused by laxative herbs.

Cathartic

A substance that assists or induces evacuation of the bowel and has a strong laxative action. They are also known as purgatives.

Cholagogue

A substance that increases the release of stored bile from the gall bladder

Choleretic

A substance that increases the production of bile by the liver

Circulatory Stimulant

A substance that improves blood flow through peripheral body tissues. Circulatory stimulants

are warming and they support vitality in the body tissues

CNS Stimulant

A substance that stimulates the central nervous system, increasing alertness

Cognition Enhancing

A substance that facilitates learning, memory or concentration

Collagen Stabilising

A substance that stabilises collagen and protects collagen from degradation. Connective tissue tone is thereby improved

Counterirritant

A substance that produces a superficial inflammation of the skin in order to relieve a deeper inflammation, eg in muscles, joints and ligaments

Demulcent

A substance that has a soothing effect on mucous membranes, for example, within the respiratory, digestive and urinary tracts

Depurative

A substance that improves detoxification and aids elimination to reduce the accumulation of metabolic waste products within the body. They were formerly known as alteratives or blood purifiers and are largely used to treat chronic skin and musculoskeletal disorders.

Diaphoretic

A substance that controls a fever, often by promoting sweating. They are also known as sudorifics.

Diuretic

A substance that increases urinary output

Diuretic Depurative

A substance that assists detoxification of the body by the kidneys

Dopaminergic Agonist

A substance that binds to and activates dopamine receptors

Emetic

A substance that causes vomiting

Emmenagogue

A substance that initiates and promotes the menstrual flow. Several of these herbs are also regarded as abortifacients

Emollient

A substance used to soothe, soften or protect skin

Expectorant

A substance that improves the clearing of excess mucus from the lungs by either altering the production and viscosity of mucus or improving the cough reflex

Febrifuge

See Antipyretic

Female Tonic

A substance that improves the tone, vigour and function of the female reproductive system

Galactagogue

A substance that increases breast milk production

Gastric Stimulant

See also Bitter tonic

A substance that stimulates the function of the stomach

General Body Tonic

See Tonic

Haemostatic

See Styptic

Healing Promoter

A substance that promotes the healing of tissue

Hepatic (Hepatic Tonic)

A substance that improves the tone, vigour and function of the liver. This term is vague and other more specific terms are preferable.

Hepatoprotective

A substance that protects the hepatocytes (liver cells) against toxic damage

Hepatotropho-restorative

A substance that restores the integrity of liver tissue

Hypnotic

A substance that induces drowsiness and sleep. They are also known as soporifics.

Hypocholesterolaemic

See also Hypolipidaemic

A substance that reduces the level of cholesterol in the blood

Hypoglycaemic

A substance that reduces the level of glucose in the blood

Hypolipidaemic

A substance that reduces the lipid level (cholesterol and triglycerides) of blood

Hypotensive

See also Peripheral vasodilator

A substance that reduces blood pressure

Immune Depressant

A substance that reduces immune function and is used particularly where part of the immune system is overactive

Immune Enhancing

A substance that enhances immune function

Immune Modulating

A substance that modulates and balances the activity of the immune system

Laxative

A substance that facilitates evacuation of the bowel

Local Anaesthetic

A substance that removes sensation or pain when applied locally

Lymphatic

A substance that assists detoxification by its effect on lymphatic tissue and often also improves immune function. They are often used when the lymph glands (nodes) are enlarged or tender.

Male Tonic

A substance that improved the tone, vigour and function of the male reproductive system

Metabolic Stimulant

A substance that boosts basal metabolic rate

Mucolytic

A substance that helps break up and disperse sticky mucus in the respiratory tract

Mucoprotective

A substance that protects the mucous membranes, especially in the context of the gastric lining

Mucous Membrane Tonic

A substance that improves the tone, vigour and function of the mucous membranes (particularly of the respiratory tract)

Mucous Membrane Trophorestorative

A substance that restores the integrity of mucous membranes, eg in the respiratory and digestive tracts

Nervine Tonic (Nervine)

A substance that improves the tone, vigour and function of the nervous system. Nervine tonics relax and energise the nervous system

Neuroprotective

A substance that helps prevent damage to the brain or spinal cord from ischaemia, stroke, convulsions or trauma

Nootropic

See Cognition enhancing

Nutrient

A substance that has a nutritive effect in the body

Orexigenic

A substance that stimulates appetite

Oestrogen Modulating

In the context of use of herbs, a substance that acts by subtle, poorly-understood mechanisms to promote oestrogen production and/or effects in the body. The activity may involve interaction with secondary oestrogen receptors such as those in the hypothalamus. They are used to balance hormonal effects, promote fertility and alleviate menopausal symptoms.

Ovarian Tonic

A substance that improves the tone, vigour and function of the ovaries

Oxytocic

A substance that causes contraction of the uterine muscle in association with giving birth

Parturifacient

A substance that induces labour and assists in the efficient delivery of the foetus and placenta

Partus Preparator

A substance taken in preparation for labour and childbirth. Treatment usually begins in the second trimester.

Peripheral Vasodilator

A substance that dilates or widens the peripheral blood vessels and thereby improves circulation to peripheral tissues and may assist in reducing blood pressure

Progesterogenic

A substance that promotes the effect or production of progesterone

Prolactin Inhibitor

A substance that inhibits the secretion of prolactin

Pungent

A hot-tasting substance that acts upon a common group of nerve cell receptors having the effect of warming the body and improving digestion and circulation

Purgative

See Cathartic

Refrigerant

A substance that has cooling properties, particularly when applied to the skin

Rubefacient

See Counterirritant

Rubefacients are mild counterirritants

Sedative (Mild)

A substance that reduces activity, particularly in the nervous system and decreases nervous tension. It may alleviate pain, anxiety or spasm and induce sleep.

Sexual Tonic

A substance that improves the tone, vigour and function of the sexual organs

Sialagogue

A substance that increases the secretion of the salivary glands

Skeletal Muscle Relaxant

A substance that relaxes skeletal muscle tone

Spasmolytic

A substance that reduces or relieves smooth muscle spasm (involuntary contractions)

Stimulant

A substance that heightens the function of an organ or system, eg a central nervous stimulant increases the activity of the central nervous system, particularly behavioural alertness, agitation, or excitation. The term has a second, more subtle meaning derived from the Thomsonian system (an early branch of herbal therapy in the USA): a substance capable of increasing the action or energy of the living body.

Styptic

A substance that stops bleeding when applied locally

Thymoleptic

See also Antidepressant

A substance that elevates mood

Thyroid Stimulant

A substance that enhances the activity of the thyroid gland

Tissue Perfusion Enhancing

A substance that enhances the flow of nutrients into a tissue

Tonic

Also known as General body tonic. See also other specific body tonics.

A substance that improves the tone, vigour and function of the whole body. Tonics can give a boost in energy.

Trophorestorative

A substance that has a healing and restorative action on a specific organ or tissue

TSH Antagonist

A substance that blocks the activity of TSH (thyroid stimulating hormone)

Urinary Antiseptic

A substance that inhibits the growth of or destroys micro-organisms within the urinary tract

Urinary Demulcent

A substance that has a soothing effect on mucous membranes of the urinary tract

Uterine Antihaemorrhagic

A substance that reduces the menstrual flow when taken internally

Uterine Sedative A substance that reduces the activity of the uterine muscle

Uterine Tonic

A substance that increases the tone of the uterine muscle

Vasoconstrictor

A substance that constricts or narrows the blood vessels

Vasodilator

A substance that dilates or widens the blood vessels

Vasoprotective

A substance that protects the integrity of the blood vessels, especially the fine and more delicate ones

Venotonic

A substance that improves the tone and function of the veins

Vermifuge

See Anthelmintic

Vulnerary

See also Antiulcer, Astringent, Demulcent
A Substance that promotes the healing of wounds when applied locally