

Tongkat Ali seeks to address vitality at its roots

Clinically shown to restore serum testosterone levels and alleviate the symptoms of ageing

BY ANNIE GEORGE



The symptoms of ageing are fatigue, brain fog, low libido, increase in visceral fat, erectile dysfunction, osteoporosis and simply a lack of motivation to get things done. Testosterone deficiency is a key contributor to these symptoms and the current treatment with synthetic testosterone, or testosterone replacement therapy (TRT), is potentially harmful. *Eurycoma longifolia* (Physta® Tongkat Ali) is a natural alternative to TRT, clinically shown to restore serum testosterone levels and alleviate the symptoms of ageing, thus leading to healthy ageing.

Tongkat Ali is a medicinal plant popularly known for its aphrodisiac effects and as a tonic for vitality and energy. In Malaysia, it is also known as Malaysian ginseng. In Vietnam, the herb is called Cay Ba Binh and is termed as a cure for 1,000 diseases including malaria, high blood pressure, fatigue, migraine, fever and arthritis.

Subsequent studies have proved the root extract of the plant is able to modulate healthy testosterone levels; improve physical and mental performance, skin and muscle tone; increase desire/libido, endurance, stamina and enhance the immune system. Tongkat Ali has been used for generations for as long as time can tell. Over time, the tonic has evolved in its form and currently, the urban population can consume the tonic in the form of ready cap-

sules sold at pharmacies.

Research on Tongkat Ali started in the 1980s with researchers investigating the aphrodisiac properties of this plant in animals.

Tongkat Ali was shown to increase libido and sexual arousal in young, middle aged and sluggish old rats. The pro-androgenic effects were further studied in a large programme, a collaboration between the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the US and various research institutions in Malaysia. This partnership resulted in the discovery that Tongkat Ali is able to modulate testosterone levels and improve reproductive health by increasing sperm count and motility, which was eventually patented. Subsequent animal studies indicated that while Tongkat Ali modulates testosterone levels, an overconsumption of it does not lead to testosterone overdose due to a feedback mechanism controlled in the hypothalamus of the brain, proving the plant to be adaptogenic.

Testosterone is a hormone produced naturally in the body. The hormone affects the physical, mental and sexual well-being of a person. When testosterone levels dip due to either the ageing process or diseases, symptoms like fatigue, a lack of libido, erectile dysfunction and infertility, loss of muscle mass and bone density and a widening circumference of the waist occur. This is known as testosterone deficiency syndrome and is sometimes termed hypogonadism or andropause, which inadvertently affects the quality of life, especially among working adults. Low levels of testosterone can cause depression and mental fog. This is one of

the factors affecting motivation to get things done and affects many areas of our daily living, including work performance.

A renowned andrologist, Dr Ismail Tambi, explored the use of Tongkat Ali in several hypogonadic patients. Not only did testosterone levels improve in these men, it was accompanied by a remarkable improvement in the quality of life determined by the Ageing Male Questionnaire, which evaluates one's overall general well-being, mood, sexual health, strength, vitality, et cetera. He further prescribed Tongkat Ali for men with idiopathic infertility or infertility when the cause is unknown. As a result, some of these men had a higher chance of impregnating their partners and for others, it allowed for less invasive artificial assisted fertility. This of course is a much welcomed discovery with infertility among couples on the rise.

The research on Tongkat Ali has been continuous and generated a lot of interest among scientists. A large, randomised placebo controlled clinical trial was conducted in the hospital of the University of Science Malaysia where men between the ages of 35 and 55 were given either Tongkat Ali or a placebo. Men on Tongkat Ali were observed to have a better quality of life seen by their increase in physical vitality and libido, fat reduction, improvements in semen volume and sperm motility.

The interest of the scientific community persisted and they investigated Tongkat Ali beyond aphrodisiac and sexual properties. As it is well known, muscle tone and strength decrease with age and pre-

dispose one to fall-related injury. Tongkat Ali has been investigated for ergogenic benefits — the ability to increase and maintain muscle strength and size — which decline with age. Scientists investigated the effect of Tongkat Ali supplementation in men on intensive strength training. The men on Tongkat Ali had greater muscle strength, size and fat-free mass compared to those on the placebo. In a US study, competitive cyclists on a 24-hour mountain biking recovered quicker from fatigue when on Tongkat Ali. According to Dr Shawn Talbott, a nutritionist with Supplements Watch in the US, the cyclists had lower cortisol and higher testosterone levels, hence creating an anabolic state that supported greater recovery from fatigue. In fact, Dr Talbott was able to demonstrate that the reduction in cortisol, the stress hormone, also resulted in stress reduction and Tongkat Ali promoting a calming effect, in a separate published clinical study of Tongkat Ali supplementation in stressed men and women.

Sustaining muscle tone is important as one ages. A structural musculature form is important for physical strength and mobility. As testosterone levels deplete at 1% annually after 30 years of age, a common negative impact is osteoporosis. Testosterone modulates bone formation through androgenic activity via androgen receptors.

Osteoporosis occurs when the rate of bone resorption is higher than bone formation. Tongkat Ali supplementation in two animal researches showed a prevention of bone calcium loss in a testosterone deficient osteoporosis model.

A combination therapy of testosterone and Tongkat Ali further reduced bone turnover and improved bone strength.

As one ages, the immune system weakens and is a major cause of mortality and morbidity. A recent clinical trial showed that Tongkat Ali has immune-boosting effects. It increases the production of T cells and naive T cells (particularly important in fighting new infections) and rejuvenates the immune system.

The use of Tongkat Ali has evolved through the centuries from the product of old wives' tales to scientifically substantiated use in improving and maintaining optimal health and vitality. Tongkat Ali is scientifically substantiated for the improvement of the quality of life through increased vitality, a healthier reproductive and sexual health, a natural stress buster, improves bone and muscle strength and boosts immunity. Tongkat Ali, an adaptogen, is able to benefit one's overall physical and mental health for optimal health and living.

Due to the remarkable anti-ageing properties of Tongkat Ali, the standardised and scientifically substantiated Tongkat Ali water extract Physta® was awarded the Industry Success Story in the Anti-Ageing category at this year's Vitafoods Europe, held yearly in Geneva, a leading global nutraceutical event for ingredients and raw materials for dietary supplements and functional food and beverage industries.

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