

# herbs at a glance

## Yohimbe



© Steven Foster

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).

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND HUMAN SERVICES

National Institutes of Health

National Center for Complementary  
and Alternative Medicine



NCAM

- 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/](http://nccam.nih.gov/timetotalk/).

## Sources

Yohimbe. Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database Web site. Accessed at [www.naturaldatabase.com](http://www.naturaldatabase.com) on July 28, 2009.

Yohimbe bark. In: Blumenthal M, Goldberg A, Brinckman J, eds. *Herbal Medicine: Expanded Commission E Monographs*. Newton, MA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 2000:429-431.

Yohimbe bark extract. Natural Standard Database Web site. Accessed at [www.naturalstandard.com](http://www.naturalstandard.com) on July 28, 2009.

## For More Information

Visit the NCCAM Web site at [nccam.nih.gov](http://nccam.nih.gov) and view *Using Dietary Supplements Wisely* ([nccam.nih.gov/health/supplements/wiseuse.htm](http://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](mailto:info@nccam.nih.gov)

## PubMed®

Web site: [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez)

## NIH Office of Dietary Supplements

Web site: [www.ods.od.nih.gov](http://www.ods.od.nih.gov)

## NIH National Library of Medicine's MedlinePlus

Yohimbe Listing: [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/759.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/759.html)

*This publication is not copyrighted and is in the public domain. Duplication is encouraged.*

NCCAM has provided this material for your information. It is not intended to substitute for the medical expertise and advice of your primary health care provider. We encourage you to discuss any decisions about treatment or care with your health care provider. The mention of any product, service, or therapy is not an endorsement by NCCAM.

National Institutes of Health



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services