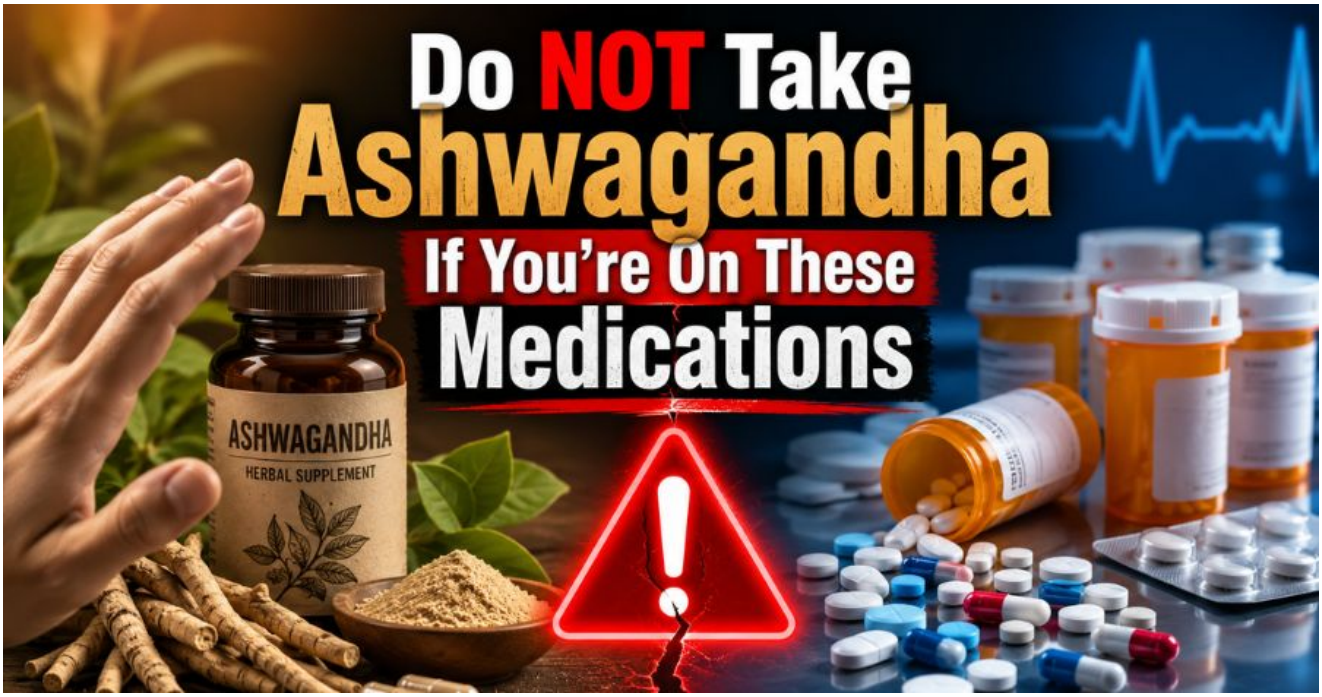
HOME

Do Not Take Ashwagandha If You're on These Medications

By bestfolkmedicine · 20/05/2026 · 6 min read



Ashwagandha has become one of the most popular herbs in the wellness world.

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People take it for stress, sleep, cortisol balance, energy, anxiety, focus, hormones, and overall resilience. In Ayurveda, ashwagandha is known as a strengthening adaptogen — a herb traditionally used to help the body adapt to stress.

But here is the part many supplement brands do not say loudly enough:

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Ashwagandha is natural, but it is not harmless for everyone.

This root can influence the nervous system, thyroid hormones, blood sugar, blood pressure, immune activity, and even how sedating certain medicines feel. That means it may not be safe to combine with some prescriptions or medical conditions.

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The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health warns that ashwagandha may interact with medications for diabetes, high blood pressure, immunosuppressants, sedatives, anticonvulsants, and thyroid hormone medications. It is also not recommended for people with autoimmune or thyroid disorders, or those about to have surgery.

So before you add this trendy herb to your routine, read this carefully.

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What Is Ashwagandha?

Ashwagandha, also called **Withania somnifera**, is a root used in traditional Ayurvedic medicine.

It is often promoted as an “adaptogen,” meaning it may help the body respond better to stress. Many people use it for calmness, sleep quality, mental tension, and fatigue.

But ashwagandha is biologically active. It is not just a gentle tea. It contains compounds called **withanolides**, which may affect inflammation pathways, stress response, immune activity, and hormone signaling.

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That is exactly why it can be helpful for some people — and risky for others.

1. Thyroid Medication

Be very careful with ashwagandha if you take thyroid medication, especially **levothyroxine**, liothyronine, or other thyroid hormone drugs.

Ashwagandha may influence thyroid hormone levels. If you already take thyroid medication, adding ashwagandha could potentially push thyroid activity too high in some people.

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Possible signs of too much thyroid activity may include:

Fast heartbeat

Anxiety or restlessness

Sweating

Shaky hands

Insomnia

Unexplained weight loss

Feeling overheated

NCCIH and Merck Manual both list thyroid hormone medications as a possible interaction concern with ashwagandha.

This does not mean everyone on thyroid medicine will react badly. It means you should not combine them casually.

2. Diabetes Medication and Insulin

Ashwagandha may lower blood sugar.

That sounds helpful — until you combine it with medication that already lowers blood sugar.

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People taking **insulin**, metformin, sulfonylureas, GLP-1 medications, or other diabetes drugs should be cautious. The concern is that blood sugar could drop too low, especially if you are fasting, eating less, exercising more, or already tightly controlled.

Possible signs of low blood sugar include:

Shakiness

Sweating

Dizziness

Confusion

Weakness

Fast heartbeat

Sudden hunger
Feeling faint

Merck Manual states that ashwagandha might lower blood sugar and may be unsafe with glucose-lowering medications because blood sugar could drop too much.

For people with diabetes, this is especially important: never add ashwagandha without discussing it with your doctor or pharmacist.

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3. Blood Pressure Medication

Ashwagandha may also lower blood pressure.

If you take medication for hypertension, such as ACE inhibitors, ARBs, beta blockers, calcium channel blockers, or diuretics, combining them with ashwagandha could increase the risk of blood pressure dropping too low.

Possible signs may include:

Lightheadedness
Dizziness when standing
Fatigue
Blurred vision
Fainting
Weakness

NCCIH lists high blood pressure medications as a potential interaction, and Merck Manual warns that ashwagandha may not be safe for people taking blood pressure drugs because of its possible blood-pressure-lowering effect.

Natural does not always mean “safe to stack.”

4. Sedatives, Sleeping Pills, and Anti-Anxiety Medication

Ashwagandha is often used for calmness and sleep. But that calming effect may become too strong when mixed with sedating medications.

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Use caution if you take:

Benzodiazepines
Sleeping pills
Barbiturates
Certain anxiety medications
Muscle relaxers
Some antihistamines
Alcohol or other sedating substances

Memorial Sloan Kettering notes that preclinical studies suggest ashwagandha has sedative and GABA-related properties and may have additive effects with anticonvulsants, barbiturates, and benzodiazepines.

Too much sedation may cause excessive drowsiness, poor coordination, slow reaction time, confusion, or breathing problems in vulnerable people.

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Do not mix ashwagandha with strong sedatives unless your healthcare provider specifically approves it.

5. Anti-Seizure Medication

Ashwagandha may interact with anticonvulsant medications.

This matters for people who take medicine for epilepsy, seizures, nerve pain, or certain mood disorders.

Because ashwagandha may affect calming neurotransmitter pathways, it could theoretically add to the effects of anti-seizure drugs. NCCIH lists anticonvulsants among medications that may interact

with ashwagandha.

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If you have a seizure disorder, this is not a supplement to experiment with on your own.

6. Immunosuppressant Medication

Ashwagandha may influence immune system activity.

That can be a problem if you take medicines designed to suppress the immune system.

This includes medications used for:

Autoimmune disease
Organ transplant protection
Rheumatoid arthritis
Lupus
Multiple sclerosis
Inflammatory bowel disease
Psoriasis
Certain biologic treatments
Long-term steroid therapy

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NCCIH lists immunosuppressants as a medication category that may interact with ashwagandha, and it also advises against ashwagandha for people with autoimmune disorders.

This is important because many people with autoimmune conditions are attracted to “natural anti-stress” supplements — but immune-modulating herbs can be complicated in autoimmune disease.

7. Medications That Can Affect the Liver

Ashwagandha has been linked to rare cases of liver injury.

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Most healthy adults tolerate it well, but case reports have raised enough concern that people with liver disease or those taking medications that stress the liver should be cautious.

The NCCIH notes that ashwagandha may cause liver damage in rare cases.

Speak with a clinician before using ashwagandha if you take liver-sensitive medications or have liver problems, such as hepatitis, fatty liver disease, cirrhosis, or elevated liver enzymes.

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Watch for warning signs such as:

Yellow skin or eyes

Dark urine

Severe fatigue

Nausea

Itching

Upper right abdominal pain

These symptoms need medical attention.

8. Medication Before Surgery

Ashwagandha should generally be stopped before surgery unless your doctor says otherwise.

Why?

Because it may affect sedation, blood pressure, blood sugar, and how your body responds during anesthesia and recovery.

NCCIH says ashwagandha is not recommended for people who are about to have surgery.

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If you have a procedure planned, tell your surgeon and anesthesiologist about every supplement you take — not just prescription drugs.

Who Else Should Avoid Ashwagandha?

Even if you are not on medication, ashwagandha may not be right for you.

Avoid or get medical guidance first if you are:

Pregnant

Breastfeeding

Diagnosed with thyroid disease

Living with an autoimmune condition

Managing liver disease

Taking multiple prescriptions

Preparing for surgery

Sensitive to sedating herbs

Using alcohol heavily

Older, frail, or medically complex

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Ashwagandha is often marketed as “safe for everyone,” but that is not true.

The Biggest Mistake People Make

The biggest mistake is thinking:

“It’s herbal, so I don’t need to mention it to my doctor.”

That is exactly how interactions happen.

Herbs can be powerful. They can support the body, but they can also amplify, weaken, or complicate medication effects.

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A good rule: if a supplement is strong enough to help, it may also be strong enough to interact.

Safer Natural Alternatives for Stress Support

If you cannot take ashwagandha, that does not mean you have no natural options.

You may consider gentler support such as:

Magnesium-rich foods

Chamomile tea

Lemon balm tea

Lavender aromatherapy

Breathing exercises

Evening walks

Morning sunlight

Protein-rich breakfast

Reduced caffeine

Better sleep routine

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Even these can have cautions for certain people, but they are often gentler than ashwagandha extracts.

Final Thoughts

Ashwagandha can be a beautiful herb for the right person.

But it is not a casual supplement for everyone — especially if you take thyroid medication, diabetes drugs, blood pressure medication, sedatives, anti-seizure medication, immunosuppressants, or medicines that may affect the liver.

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Before taking it, ask one simple question:

“Could this herb change how my medication works?”

With ashwagandha, the answer may be yes.

Natural medicine should be wise, not reckless. The goal is not to take every trending herb. The goal is to choose the right support for your body, your history, and your medications.

Read online: https://bestfolkmedicine.com/2026/05/ashwagandha-medication-interactions/

Downloaded on 21/11/2026

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