



HEALTH & WELLNESS

## Anxiety, Blood Sugar and the Holidays

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Patient gets irritable when hungry? Dubbed "hangry," this should alert the practitioner to the presence of adrenal fatigue. This, and the associated anxiety and irritability, can then be driven by high-sugar diets; an especially significant problem around stressful, albeit also joyful, holidays.

The information that follows can save not only people's emotional well-being, but also their relationships, as moodiness caused by low blood sugar is a major trigger for marital stress.

Anxiety can make anyone fall prey to unhealthy eating as a form of stress relief. In many cases, this combination of nervous tension and consumption of high-calorie, low-nutritional-value foods can set up a pattern that persists well after the holidays.

Fortunately, there are natural medicines available that can ease anxiety and normalize blood sugar levels. Both are clinically validated, have no negative side effects and are easily incorporated into a daily regimen.

Anxiety Is Common During the Holidays



There are many reasons why your patients may be stressed and anxious during the holiday season: the time crunch, extra plans, and their own heightened expectations of what they "should" be doing and how they "should" be feeling. One way to help is by recommending a botanical that has shown remarkable results - a clinically studied form of *Echinacea angustifolia*.

It may seem odd to talk about an herb associated with immune defense as having anxiolytic properties, but this particular echinacea extract is not for fending off colds and flus. Instead, this specific extract from a specially cultivated plant calms nerves and relieves anxiety.

The path to discovery came about when researchers at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences were analyzing different species of echinacea and found that some of the plants contained the most effective levels of alkamides - compounds with effects on the endocannabinoid system similar to phytocannabinoids from hemp.<sup>1</sup>

Clinical research has found that this extract works quickly. A study published in *Phytotherapy Research* included women and men with anxiety (average age, 41 years) who were assessed using the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI). Participants took this specialized echinacea extract (20 mg, twice daily) for one week and evaluated their anxiety before, during and after using the product.

In three days, anxiety levels were significantly lower in both state and trait categories. The effects remained stable for the duration of the clinical trial and even for two weeks following treatment, without causing negative side effects.<sup>2</sup>

Another clinical study found similar effects at higher dosages (40 mg, twice daily) for individuals with more severe anxiety. In only seven days, anxiety scores decreased by 11 points in the echinacea group, and only about three points in the placebo group by the end of the study. In this case, the benefits remained after patients stopped taking the extract for three weeks following

treatment.<sup>3</sup>

[Insert Anxiety Chart HERE]

One of the most important benefits of this unique echinacea extract is that it provides individuals with a sharp contrast to conventional medications in terms of safety and side effects. It is an effective herbal option to relieve nervousness, tension and restless nights for anyone dealing with anxiety - whether from occasional stresses or long-term daily struggles.

#### Blood-Sugar Issues Frequently Follow Stress

Unfortunately, anxiety often causes individuals to take solace in snacking, and many holiday foods - full of sugars, fats, and refined carbs - become the "go-to" option for stress reduction. Not only does that pave a path to gaining weight, but the effects of sugars can be especially stress-inducing in the brain, making this habit a spiral that is tough to steer away from.

But there is a natural medicine that can make a difference here as well. Clinically studied *Hintonia latiflora* can help get blood sugar and A1C levels back to normal. It may also help stop the "roller coaster" effect brought about by refined carbs and sugars that can cause individuals to keep eating unhealthy, high-sugar foods, even though they know it isn't a good choice.

Extracts from the bark of *Hintonia latiflora*, a shrubby tree that grows in the Sonoran Desert, have been used in folk medicine in Mexico and Central America for generations. In the past 70 years or so, it's been used to treat and even reverse high blood sugar levels, insulin resistance and other aspects of type 2 diabetes.

Hintonia inhibits glucosidases and slows the breakdown and absorption of sugar in the gut. This delays the release of sugar into the bloodstream and keeps glucose levels stable, rather than allowing them to spike, a main cause of excessive insulin release - and anxiety.<sup>4,5</sup>

Coutareagenin, a polyphenol nutrient found in the bark extracts of Hintonia, appears to be responsible for other blood-sugar-controlling benefits of the botanical, reducing insulin resistance and inflammation.<sup>6-7</sup>

In fact, research has shown Hintonia is so effective that, in some cases, patients with type 2 diabetes could reduce or eliminate their need for medications.<sup>8-9</sup>

One clinical study of 177 individuals with either type 2 diabetes or pre-diabetes tested a Hintonia extract combined with additional nutrients, including vitamins B<sub>1</sub>, B<sub>6</sub>, B<sub>12</sub>, folic acid, chromium, zinc, and vitamins C and E for eight months.

The results were impressive: participants' A1C levels improved by an average of 10.4 percent, and fasting and postprandial glucose readings improved by an average of 23.3 percent and 24.9 percent, respectively.

Throughout the duration of the study, individuals taking anti-diabetic prescription drugs simply stayed on their medication, adding the Hintonia and nutrient combination to their existing regimen. After eight months, of the 114 patients using antidiabetic drugs at the beginning of the study, 35 reduced their medication and 10 participants stopped using medication entirely because it was no longer necessary.<sup>8</sup>

## Anxiety and Elevated Blood Sugar Aren't Inevitable

Stressful times may make your patients feel that their emotions and reactions are in charge of everything, including their diets. But that doesn't have to be the case.

I have found that clinically studied *Echinacea angustifolia* and *Hintonia latiflora* can make a tremendous difference for anyone who feels stuck in a cycle of anxiety, stress-reactive eating habits, and subsequent issues with glucose levels. Adding adrenal support if people get "hangry" can also be a game changer.

If your patients have received an unwelcome gift of stress and the ups and downs of blood sugar, consider recommending these natural options. I think the combination will help them experience peace of mind and body this season - and every season.

*Author's Note:* In my book, *Diabetes Is Optional*, I discuss *Hintonia* and other natural medicines and lifestyle adjustments that can help your patients overcome high blood sugar levels, and the conditions that can lead to them.

### References

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