



Valerian - <i>Valeriana officinalis</i>	
Description	Valerian is a perennial plant native to North America and Europe. It has pinky white flowers and its root contains therapeutic compounds - valepotriates, valeric acid and volatile oils - which combine to give sedative effects.
Traditional Use	Valerian is used for its sedative effects. It calms the brain and body, allowing sleep to occur naturally. Its sedative effects also help to ease stress. It is also used to relax the smooth muscle in the gastro-intestinal tract and calm digestive complaints.
Commercial Availability & Dosage	Valerian supplements are available as standardised extracts containing 0.8% valeric acid, and come as liquid extracts, teas, or in tablet or capsule form. Dosage range ¹ : 2-6mL liquid extract (1:2) daily; 3-9g dried root (as a tea/infusion) daily.
Precautions / Contra-Indications	Valerian is not addictive, but try to avoid taking it for more than two weeks in a row. It is suitable to take alongside other herbs, such as Chamomile and St. John's Wort. Caution should be taken when driving or operating heavy machinery, when using Valerian in high doses ¹ .
Pregnancy & Breastfeeding¹	Do not use if pregnant or breastfeeding.
Adverse Effects¹	Studies have shown that valerian has no dangerous side effects. However, extremely large doses may cause dizziness, restlessness, blurred vision, nausea, headache, giddiness and grogginess. Valerian has also been reported to cause vivid dreams.
Interactions¹	Valerian should not be combined with prescription sleeping drugs, tranquillisers or alcohol.
References	1. Braun & Cohen. Herbs and Natural Supplements: An evidence-based guide. Churchill Livingstone, 2005.