

# **DHEA (Dehydroepiandrosterone)**

## **WHAT IS DHEA?**

DHEA is a naturally occurring weak androgenic (male) steroid hormone produced by the adrenal glands. Sometimes called the superstar of anti-aging hormones, DHEA is the most plentiful hormone in the body.

## **WHAT DOES DHEA DO?**

It has been used for a variety of reasons including to try and prevent aging, improve sexual function/erectile dysfunction, treat cognitive decline, enhanced athletic performance, facilitate weight loss, improve strength, treat osteoporosis, improve immunomodulation for rheumatologic conditions and to treat depression.

Since its release to the market in the mid 90's, DHEA has risen rapidly in popularity. It appears to be well tolerated and safe when taken in physiologic doses (less than 200 mg). DHEA may have some potential benefit for a variety of conditions. Despite improvement in study design with the implementation of prospective double blind trials, the total patient numbers remain small, when compared to many of the studies sponsored by pharmaceutical companies seeking FDA approval for a specific condition. No studies have examined the tolerability of high doses of DHEA in women or their longer term safety profile in men.

## **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL SIDE EFFECTS?**

Potential side effects include acne, irritability, increase in sex drive, liver toxicity, increased appetite, alterations in cholesterol and prostate enlargement. Part of the low incidence of discernable side effects likely comes from use of close-to-physiologic doses (less than 200 mg) of DHEA in studies. Higher doses might have a different side effect profile and warrant more careful monitoring from your health care provider.

## **DOSE**

Doses range from 25 to 1600 mg per day. Women treating menopausal effects (hot flashes, night sweats, etc.) often do very well at the lower level of the dosage range.