

Valeriana officinalis

Valeriana officinalis, commonly known as Valerian, is a perennial flowering plant native to Europe and parts of Asia. Its roots have been traditionally used for centuries as a calming herbal remedy to support sleep, relaxation, and nervous system balance. Today, valerian remains one of the most widely used herbal supplements for sleep support worldwide.

Key facts

- **Scientific name:** *Valeriana officinalis*
- **Common names:** Valerian
- **Family:** Caprifoliaceae
- **Active compounds:** Valerenic acid, iridoids, flavonoids
- **Typical forms:** Capsules, teas, tinctures, extracts

Botanical characteristics

Valeriana officinalis is a tall perennial herb with clusters of small pink or white flowers and aromatic roots. The roots are harvested, dried, and processed into medicinal preparations used for relaxation and sleep support.

Traditional and modern uses

Traditionally, valerian has been used to calm nervous tension, support restful sleep, and reduce stress-related symptoms. In modern herbal medicine, it is frequently included in sleep-support supplements and calming herbal blends.

Mechanism and research

Research suggests that valerian compounds may interact with gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) pathways associated with relaxation and sleep regulation. Clinical studies have investigated valerian for insomnia, sleep quality, and stress-related symptoms, although findings remain variable between studies.

Safety and regulation

Valerian is generally considered safe when used in moderate amounts. Some individuals may experience mild drowsiness, dizziness, or gastrointestinal discomfort. Caution is advised when combining valerian with sedative medications, alcohol, or activities requiring alertness.

Culinary and supplement context

Valerian is widely available in teas, capsules, tinctures, and sleep-support formulations. Its longstanding reputation as a natural calming herb continues to support its popularity in global wellness and herbal supplement markets.