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Episode 117 – A Superhero Herb for Body & Brain: KSM-66 Ashwagandha

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Jonathan: Welcome everyone to another episode of Empowering You Organically. I'm your host, Jonathan Hunsaker, joined by my lovely cohost, TeriAnn Trevenen.

TeriAnn: Hey everyone.

Jonathan: So today we're going to talk about Ashwagandha. Ashwagandha is a big buzz herb that's going around the natural health space and we're going to talk just the benefits of it, why you should be taking it or maybe you shouldn't be taking it. We're also going to talk about the source of Ashwagandha that you take. There's a lot of studies around Ashwagandha, but the challenge there is, is are you taking a high-quality Ashwagandha that is similar or the same as what was in the study or is it some cheap Ashwagandha that you just bought off of Amazon? +

Jonathan: So with all that, let's first just start talking about what is Ashwagandha.

TeriAnn: Sure. Ashwagandha is an important herb in the ancient Indian system of medicine known as Ayurveda to promote general health and wellbeing. An Ayurvedic practice, Ashwagandha is classified as Rasayana which means an herb or preparation that rejuvenates, extends life and promotes a youthful state of physical and mental health.

TeriAnn: So, when it comes to Ashwagandha, it's known as a super power and that it's an adaptogen. Adaptogens are nontoxic therapies that normalize our bodily functions, both physical and mental, that are thrown out of balance when we are exposed to chronic, uncontrolled stress. What a lot of people don't know about Ashwagandha is how many benefits it really has in relation to that specifically.

TeriAnn: It can counter pain and joint swelling associated with arthritis, boost various components of the immune system, protect the brain and nervous system, slow down, or even kill abnormal cells and enhance both male and female sexual desire and functions. A lot of important aspects of the body.

Jonathan: I think one of the biggest things to understand is that it's an adaptogen, right? And so it's easy to remember it like helps our body adapt to things, especially when it comes to stress. And nowadays, I mean everybody just overstressed. There's stress from work, there's stress from kids, there's stress from this idea that we have to go 24/7, that stress causes a cortisol release, as is be over inflamed, chronically inflamed. So understand Ashwagandha is really good for that stress management as an adaptogen, but then it has all of these other benefits that go along with it.

TeriAnn: Yeah. Well, and let's talk about the stress and increased cortisol for a minute because any stressful event in our lives causes our adrenal glands to produce cortisol, a steroid hormone that acts to

control blood sugar levels, regulate metabolism, lower inflammation levels, influence memory formation, and manage salt and water balance. So our cortisol levels are really important in relation to what's going on within our body. And a lot of those important functions that we talked about earlier on, just a few minutes ago, that come as a benefit of Ashwagandha are all impacted by these spiked cortisol levels when we have stressful situations or stressors come up in our lives.

Jonathan: I mean, I think most of us, our adrenals are fatigued. We live in this world of go, go, go. Right? So whether you're driving your car at 70 miles an hour down the freeway and you're constantly having to be on high alert or your phone is buzzing every eight minutes and you got to quickly and look at it, "Did I miss something on Instagram, on Facebook, somebody messaging me, I got to do this. What's happening here?" And it's like we're in this constant state of over stimulation, right?

TeriAnn: Constantly.

Jonathan: We're constantly stimulated and it's not giving our bodies... Our bodies need a time to chill out and relax. We weren't designed to run constantly at this level. And so Ashwagandha really helps from that standpoint.

TeriAnn: Yeah. Well, and let's go back to the cortisol for a minute. Because talking about all these stressors, talking about how we're constantly going, it's just, it's so important to note the cortisol levels and why Ashwagandha is good at maintaining healthy levels there and maintaining better stress levels. But you can't just take Ashwagandha and hope that like, "Oh, I'm going to feel better," it's a lifestyle change too.

TeriAnn: Why is it super important to notice your stress levels, be getting nutrients in your body that helps support healthy stress levels because too much cortisol in the blood over a prolonged period of time can lead to rapid weight gain, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, muscle weakness, mood swings, anxiety, depression, irritability. So all of these things like who wants to feel that way? And I think we really got to be more aware of our stress levels and keeping it in check, eating things in our diet and our nutrition that help to balance out those stress levels.

TeriAnn: And we are constantly overstimulated. I think if you were to ask people, "How many times did you sit down and just breathe today?" "How many times did you just sit down and not do anything? Like no phone, no computer, no iPad, no stimulation, no go, go, go. No working, no checking emails?" How many people would say, "Oh, I sat down for 20 minutes today. Just sat there. Just let myself be." It's not something we do anymore.

Jonathan: Well, you made a comment early on that I think is vitally important and it's not like you can just start taking Ashwagandha and it's going to fix all of this stress that's going on in your life. It's like that with all supplements, right? They're just that. They're there to supplement your already healthy lifestyle or your diet. It's there to help fill in the gaps.

Jonathan: You may take a multivitamin or things like that because you're not getting all the vitamins and nutrients from the food that you're eating. It's the same thing. I mean, even if we were to be extremely mindful and slow way down and calm down, we're probably still overstimulated. Right? And that's where Ashwagandha can really come and help.

Jonathan: So now listen, if you're just overly stressed constantly and you're not going to change your lifestyle, Ashwagandha is likely going to help a little bit. When you're really going to see a big difference is if you make those changes in your life, just slow down a little bit, not telling you to stop, but just get some breaks and then you also take Ashwagandha with that, it's going to really amplify it because you're not starting from such a high level.

TeriAnn: Yep. I agree. I think it's important when we think about taking supplements or changing our nutrition, help support your body and those things you're putting in your body to make things better by changing your lifestyle. We don't talk about that enough. I think when it comes to supplementation, nutrition, there's so many things that you can do on the physical side of your body externally that support the intake of healthy nutrition, healthy supplementation.

TeriAnn: So let's talk a little bit about how Ashwagandha helps us cope with stress. A double-blind, placebo-controlled trial was conducted to assess the safety and efficacy of a certain type of KSM-66 Ashwagandha, which we're going to talk about in just a minute, in 64 adults. After 60 days of treatment, the study authors observed a substantial reduction in four separate measures of stress in the study participants. So this is really significant when it comes to stress showing that Ashwagandha really can impact your stress levels and help to take those down. And I want to touch on KSM-66 Ashwagandha for a minute since we've opened that can of worms. Why don't you talk a little bit to the listeners about what that is?

Jonathan: Well, I mean here's the challenge and it happens with a lot of different studies that are out there. So there's hundreds of studies around Ashwagandha. It says Ashwagandha does this, Ashwagandha does that. And so a lot of supplement manufacturers will go out there and they'll call their different sources for ingredients. And they'll shop around for the best priced Ashwagandha because there's all this buzz around Ashwagandha so I want to throw it into a capsule. I want to spend all of my money on marketing this amazing new Ashwagandha and make a ton of money. And that's what most people do.

Jonathan: Here's the challenges. What was the quality of the Ashwagandha that was actually in that study? What was it used? Because you have to understand that there's different strains of Ashwagandha. You have to understand that the soil that the Ashwagandha was growing in makes a big difference. Is it organic Ashwagandha? Was it non organic Ashwagandha? What's the potency? Is that soil been over farmed?

Jonathan: I mean, if the nutrients aren't in the soil, it cannot make it into that botanical, right? And so there's all of these different variables. So you can't just go to Amazon, type in Ashwagandha and see there's this \$15 bottle of Ashwagandha and expect these great results. Chances are that company spent 50 cents, maybe 75 cents on those 30 or 60 pills packaging and all and they're doing a 10 or 12X mark up and send it to you for 15 bucks. You're not going to see any of the results because it's just a poor quality Ashwagandha.

Jonathan: There's a lot of this that's going on in the CBD space right now. I don't remember what it is, a hundred million acres, a hundred thousand acres, something crazy going on over in Africa where they're growing hemp by just the bushels and it's a low quality hemp and they're going to extract the CBD. You're going to start seeing CBD prices drop way down, but the quality of that CBD is going to matter tremendously. It's the same thing with Ashwagandha.

Jonathan: So for instance, we put Ashwagandha inside of our Turmeric 3D, and our very first formulation was just a regular organic Ashwagandha. We started doing studies, we started realizing that there's an actual patented Ashwagandha that has these double-blind, placebo-controlled studies behind them. And that's KSM 66 and that's an organic Ashwagandha. The reason we chose to do that... Yes, it costs more money. Yes, there's all these reasons that we should not do it from a business standpoint when it comes to profits, but all the reasons that we should do it from a health standpoint because we can actually back up the claims, right?

Jonathan: We know that the studies were done on this specific type of Ashwagandha and so when it says, "Hey, 60 out of these 66 people saw this result," well I'm not just selling you some crap Ashwagandha and linking it to a study with this high quality Ashwagandha, and that's what 99% of supplement companies do out there.

Jonathan: That's why it's really important to look at... And not all botanicals and ingredients can be patented or have patents behind them. But when they are, and there's studies behind them like this, that's what you want to look for. Again, for me, KSM-66 Ashwagandha is the go-to, the organic... I'm trying to think if they have an organic and a nonorganic. I think all of it is organic. And so when we're talking to you about studies right now we're talking about that specific Ashwagandha. That's why we put it in our Turmeric 3D because that really matters.

Jonathan: It's the same thing with turmeric and with all kinds of other things. There's 2000 studies on how great turmeric is for you, but are you getting this crap turmeric at \$25 a bottle off of Amazon? Probably.

TeriAnn: Well, and what does this mean in simple terms? So something like KSM-66 Ashwagandha is an extremely high concentration of Ashwagandha. Not only are the farming and manufacturing processes for this ingredient very high quality and it makes it a more expensive product, but it's also a very high concentration. If you're taking such a minimal amount in your supplement, you want it to be a high concentration because you want to get the biggest benefit out of it.

TeriAnn: And that's why it makes it a more expensive ingredient. And you know, as Jonathan mentioned, we talked about this a lot with things in our industry: supplements, skincare and beyond. People will get all hyped about a new product. We talked about hemp or CBD and it's a hot topic right now and the prices are going to go way down. And then what you have to be looking for in the market, if you're really concerned about your health and quality is who is pricing their products at a competitive price point.

TeriAnn: And then to take it one step further, who's testing their products for not only results, like we have this KSM Ashwagandha 66 that has results behind it because it's been tested and researched and it's actually got studies behind it. And then we take it one step further once it's manufactured into our product, we go and have our products tested for quality and cleanliness, herbicides, pesticides, GMOs, all of those things. And so, you know, as the markets change and the trends change and things shift, pricing is an interesting thing.

TeriAnn: Yes, people can price them very high and they can be a low quality, but typically those really high price points, we're frustrated with them, but it's those people who are typically producing a higher quality product if they have test results to back them. So just something to think about when you're looking at your supplements, looking at your ingredients.

Jonathan: Yeah, I mean a little insider tip here from being in this space for a while. This is why it's important to know who your supplement company is. Most supplement companies are getting about a 12X return on their supplement. What does that mean? When you go to Amazon, you type in turmeric and you see these \$35 bottles of turmeric. It's costing them about \$3 for that turmeric to produce it, to encapsulate it and to put it inside of a bottle and stick a label on it. We're talking \$3 for this \$35 product.

Jonathan: A higher end company that uses organic, fermented blends, things like that, like us, we see about a three and a half to four times markup on, yet the profits are a whole heck of a lot lower, but the quality of the product is 10X what these other ones are. Mainly for the fact that those really cheap products, you're getting no benefit at all. Right? Even the mid priced ones, at least you're going to get a little bit of a benefit. Maybe they went ahead and went with an organic turmeric or maybe they did something along those lines. They made a little bit better than those cheapos, but you really get what you pay for in life and that's just the reality. And the older I get, the more I learned that.

Jonathan: Sometimes I'm always shopping for cheap, cheap, cheap, and then I constantly have to be reminded of that lesson learned that when I get cheap service, when I get cheap products, I get cheap results.

TeriAnn: Yep, absolutely. So let's get back to focusing on Ashwagandha. I just want to highlight again this study that I talked about and actually a second one to go along with it. So a double-blind, placebo-controlled trial was conducted to assess the safety and efficacy of KSM-66 Ashwagandha in 64 adults. After 60 days of treatment, the study authors observed a substantial reduction in four separate measures of stress in the study participants. Similarly, in another randomized double-blind, placebo-controlled study, 60 stressed but otherwise healthy adults were randomly assigned to take either a placebo or an Ashwagandha extract once daily for two months.

TeriAnn: At the end of the study, participants given Ashwagandha showed a significant reduction in their stress, anxiety and depression scores. Once again, Ashwagandha consumption was associated with a greater reduction in the levels of cortisol in the blood when compared with placebo. And this is specifically related to KSM-66 Ashwagandha, which is in our Turmeric 3D product, an organic sourced Ashwagandha that is a high quality based on the way that it is grown and harvested and then put in products and turned into supplements.

Jonathan: Yeah, I mean, this is one of the reasons, and I'm not trying to plug the Turmeric 3D a bunch here but I want to talk about it for a second. One of the reasons we put the Ashwagandha in our Turmeric 3D is because everybody thinks about turmeric for inflammation support, to control inflammation and control pain. Well, that's what Ashwagandha is essentially doing by decreasing your stress. Is it's decreasing that inflammation level. And so we really wanted to look at things like how do we take this holistic approach that's not just give you some turmeric, it's going to decrease some inflammation, but let's also do Ashwagandha that's going to reduce that cortisol and that other inflammation that comes from stress.

Jonathan: It's why we put Vitamin D in there because of the mood enhancement that it does to also help on those stress levels. And so I just say all that to say like understand that a good blended supplement can really give you five times a result of taking things individually. You could go get KSM-66 on its own. I'm sure there's people out there that sell it and it'll be great, but if you're taking it for stress, inflammation, things like that, consider that a strong blend that has Ashwagandha as well as turmeric,

Vitamin D, ginger, things like that, that all support inflammation, will get you five to 10x the results are just taking that single ingredient.

TeriAnn: Yeah, absolutely. We have so many amazing studies in our show notes that we're going to post for everyone but you can go and look at in relation to Ashwagandha and how it can benefit your health. But I want to touch on a few of the benefits again, really quickly that you can get from taking Ashwagandha. So the biggest one I think that we focus on today is stress.

TeriAnn: We also talked about obesity. There's a huge correlation between stress and obesity. So obviously by taking Ashwagandha and lowering your stress levels, you can help to maintain a healthier body weight for what you need and what your body needs to be healthy overall. Also, Ashwagandha benefits your body from a joint pain perspective. It's a key ingredient in many Ayurvedic formulations prescribed for joint related conditions such as osteoarthritis.

TeriAnn: Also, Ashwagandha is important for boosting endurance, muscle strength and recovery. It has a reputation for being able to enhance cardiovascular endurance and physical performance. It's immune system enhancer which.. Who doesn't want that, right? I mean I think it's so important that you have a strong immune system. I think that's one of the most critical components I learned more and more as we've done this podcast, as I read up on information around health and nutrition.

TeriAnn: One of the best things you can give yourself when it comes to your body is good gut health and a good immune system because those are key factors in maintaining overall health and longevity in your life is by keeping those things in check. So, Ashwagandha is a powerful immune system enhancer.

TeriAnn: One of the things I want to note is in a study around Ashwagandha root extract, it was seen... And this study will be in the show notes, but it was seen to activate multiple types of immune cells in the participants. Wake them up, really get your immune system working the way it needs to be working and part of that has to do with the nutrition you're putting in your body is keeping that immune system strong, really waking it up and really supercharging it to be able to take anything on that comes in your body and really turn it into powerful, powerful benefits for you and your health.

TeriAnn: Another important thing is Ashwagandha for boosting brain performance. So, traditionally used in Ayurveda to boost intellect and memory. Ashwagandha can slow, stop and reverse damage to brain cells and may even help to reconstruct brain cell networks.

TeriAnn: We've done a couple of podcasts about brain health and it's something we're focusing more on as a company right now as well because we're learning that through proper nutrition we can actually support our brain health and function. We see so many people who are now struggling with dementia and Alzheimer's, and I'm a huge believer and especially if you read the research and you're doing your homework in the fact that our nutrition and our lifestyles are contributing to our brains aging faster, having negative effects on our brain from what we're taking in our body, ingesting in our body.

TeriAnn: And so Ashwagandha is something that can boost your brain performance, boost your brain function, and actually help to benefit the cells when it comes to your brain.

Jonathan: Absolutely. I mean, we're seeing the rise of Alzheimer's and dementia at unbelievable levels. I know my grandmother, she suffered from Alzheimer's for many years and ultimately passed away from

it. It's a fear of my mom's. And the interesting thing is we don't think about it until we're 60, 65 and we start having these "senior moments". "Oh, why did I walk into the room? I forgot why I walked in here," and then we start thinking, "Oh, no, should I start doing something?" When really we should be thinking about this when we're 30, 35, 40, 45.

Jonathan: Start taking things now that help reduce the plaque build up that that happens in your brains. Feeding your brain the nutrients that it needs to constantly keep those connections and keep it firing strong and Ashwagandha is one those things. There's all kinds of other nootropics that are out there, on the market as well that help do that. But I mean Ashwagandha, it's one of those super plants. I mean that's why I was excited to do this podcast because it has so many different benefits and I love anything that's going to boost my brain.

TeriAnn: Absolutely. Another benefit of Ashwagandha is its impact on libido and infertility. On the infertility side we're talking more and more about this topic openly. It's not such a taboo topic anymore. I think for a while there was the stigma around infertility and now people are really talking about it and understanding it more. And I think infertility rates can also be impacted by our health, the things we're putting in our body. But the other side of it too is the sexual drive and sexual dysfunction.

TeriAnn: This is a conversation that I feel like so we bring it up sometimes and people be like, "We can't talk about that. We can't talk about that." Like why can't we talk about it? It's just a normal part of human life. It's reproduction, it's pleasure, it's passion. It's how we create strong bonds in our relationship. And more people suffer from sexual dysfunction than we even talk about. And Ashwagandha has been prescribed in Ayurvedic medicine for a long time as an aphrodisiac that can be used to treat male sexual dysfunction.

TeriAnn: And so, it's still such a taboo topic and most men don't want to talk about that they have sexual dysfunction. We've had someone on the podcast in the past talking about pelvic dysfunction for women and how painful it is and how much it impacts their sex life, how much it impacts the reproductive cycle and their fertility. And all those things. And I think it's such an important topic to open up and talk about. And Ashwagandha actually... And there's studies that will be in our show notes talking about how Ashwagandha can improve your sexual functioning and can also boost fertility. So be sure to check that out.

Jonathan: I'm going to speak on that for a second.

TeriAnn: Sure.

Jonathan: It's very interesting. I mean, there's a little blue pill out there, right? For the erectile dysfunction (ED), and that's claimed as like the solution. But there's so many things that contribute to men having that issue. One of those big ones is just stressors. I know when I'm overstressed, I'm not in the mood and I feel a lot less desire around that. And so taking something like Ashwagandha that decreases that stress level can make a big difference. And then diet, exercise, there's all of these different things that go into it.

Jonathan: It gets treated like erectile dysfunction is, "Oh no, now you're done for..." Time to take a little blue pill for the rest of your life. That's the solution. Every time you want to make love, it's time to take a blue pill. That's not the reality. The reality is you can control how your body functions and you can

change how your body functions through diet, through exercise, through things like Ashwagandha and taking different herbs and all of that.

Jonathan: And so I just want to express that because I get frustrated when the pharmaceutical side is just, "All right, now take this pill for the rest of your life." Whereas if you just address the issue differently, then you never have to worry about that. You never have to worry about, "Oh, let me hurry and take a pill so that can play in 30 minutes." Right? You'll be ready all the time.

TeriAnn: Yeah. Well, and the other thing too... So funny. The other thing is think about the fact that if you're doing things to improve your sex I function, your sex life, your libido, fertility, all of those things, it's going to be benefiting your body and your health in other ways as well. The healthier you are, the healthier your body is, the more well-rounded you're going to feel in your emotions, your brain function, the way your body disposes of wasting garbage in your body, the way that it uses the nutrition, things like Ashwagandha that you're putting in your body in a powerful way.

TeriAnn: So, why do you not want to feel good in all aspects? Even in that aspect that we still think is a taboo topic and we don't talk about, but it's like a normal part of human life. I think it's such an important topic. Again, we'll have incredible studies to back that up that you can look at our show notes.

Jonathan: The last thing I just want to verbalize, and we're not talking about erectile dysfunction, but there are a lot of people that are struggling with getting pregnant these days. And Ashwagandha, just a quick study here, showed 167% increase in sperm count, 53% increase in semen volume and a 57% increase in sperm mobility. So listen, this Ashwagandha is amazing for all kinds of things.

Jonathan: I wanted to make sure that we verbalize that in the podcast because it's a frustrating thing when you're trying to get pregnant, when you're trying to conceive and it's not working and then you have all these guilt and all these other things that are happening. There are things like Ashwagandha that aren't \$10,000 that your doctor... Where you can try some of these natural things to just improve your chances.

TeriAnn: Absolutely. Last thing I want to touch on really quickly before we close out today, Ashwagandha is well known in folk medicine traditions for anticancer properties and extracts have been shown to be toxic for multiple types of cancer cells in laboratory experience. So, not toxic for your body. Let's just be very clear, toxic for cancer cells, which is what you want. You don't want cancer cells be able to live in your body. They appear to act by slowing down or even stopping cancer cell growth by inducing programmed cell death or apoptosis.

TeriAnn: So again, we have powerful studies that you can read in our show notes around this really talking about this, but I wanted to touch on that one thing really quickly here as we close out. Ashwagandha protecting against abnormal cell growth, which is a critical, critical component of our health that our body can fight off those nasty cancer cells, negative cells in our body we don't want in there that can lead to things like cancer.

Jonathan: Absolutely. Listen, we all have cancer cells in our bodies all the time. It's just a matter of how strong is our immune system to continue to destroy them and not allow them to grow, and so something like Ashwagandha can certainly help and studies are showing that.

Jonathan: We have so many show notes here. Go to empoweringyouorganically.com. You're going to want to see these show notes. We'll also have the transcription there. If you like the information that we're sharing with you, please subscribe on iTunes so you don't miss a single episode. Also, leave us your feedback. Give us a five star review. It just helps other people be able to find our podcast easier.

Jonathan: I hope you enjoyed today's podcast. Do you have any final words around Ashwagandha?

TeriAnn: Nope. I think we covered quite a bit today. I hope you enjoy it.

Jonathan: Absolutely.

Jonathan: Now listen, we chose KSM-66 as the Ashwagandha that we use in Turmeric 3D because of all these studies, we think it's the highest quality one out there. I encourage you to do your research as well. If you're going to take an Ashwagandha supplement by itself, consider getting something like a KSM-66 that has the proven track record behind it. If you're looking to really combat inflammation from a broad scale, I encourage you to go to organixx.com and take a look at our Turmeric 3D.

Jonathan: It is one of our top three selling supplements. It has been for three years. It's phenomenal. We'll probably do some other podcasts talking about some other ingredients that we have in there, but go there, read about it and I think you will be pleasantly surprised at the results that you get. So, thank you everybody for tuning in and we will see you next week.

TeriAnn: Thanks everyone.

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