

Maca

Lepidium meyenii Walp. — Peruvian maca, sold as yellow, red or black root powder and gelatinized extract

Maca is a cruciferous root vegetable eaten as food in the Peruvian Andes for centuries, giving it an unusually reassuring safety record for a supplement marketed on hormonal claims. Its most interesting finding is a negative one: maca appears to improve sexual desire without changing testosterone at all, placing it in a different category from the herbs it is shelved beside.

SUMMARY TABLE

Attribute	Summary
Primary uses	Improving sexual desire/function in men and women; easing SSRI-induced sexual dysfunction; supporting semen quality; modest menopausal-symptom claims (evidence thin).
Evidence strength	Low-to-moderate, mostly older than 24 months. Multiple small RCTs support a libido effect. Menopause evidence judged insufficient by professional guidelines. Energy/athletic claims essentially unsupported.
Effective dose	1.5–3 g/day for sexual desire; 2,400 mg/day for erectile dysfunction; 1,500–3,000 mg/day for SSRI-associated dysfunction (higher end more effective).
How to take	Gelatinized powder or capsules, with food, morning or early afternoon. Gelatinization removes starch and is markedly easier on digestion than raw powder.
Time to effect	Sexual-desire effects appeared at 8 weeks (some signal at 4). Semen-parameter changes need ~3 months, a full spermatogenic cycle.
Serious risks	None well documented in humans. The one meaningful caution is thyroid-related: maca's glucosinolates, combined with a low-iodine diet, can promote goiter.
Who should avoid it	Thyroid conditions (especially on a low-iodine diet); pregnancy/breastfeeding (absent safety data rather than known harm).
Quality markers	Peruvian origin stated; ecotype (yellow/red/black) named rather than "maca blend"; gelatinized clearly labeled; third-party heavy-metal testing (root crops concentrate soil contaminants).

THE FINDING THAT DEFINES IT

In the trial that first established the pattern, men taking maca reported significantly increased sexual desire independent of serum testosterone, which did not change — a finding replicated in broad shape since. Maca is routinely shelved beside tongkat ali and tribulus as a "testosterone booster" and almost certainly does not work that way; whatever it does, it likely works through a central, neurotransmitter-mediated route rather than an endocrine one.

SEXUAL FUNCTION IS THE BEST-SUPPORTED CLAIM

A 2025 systematic review of herbal supplements for erectile dysfunction places maca among the botanicals with meaningful supporting data, in a field where most entrants have none. A separate systematic review and meta-analysis found measurable improvements in semen parameters, though spermatogenesis's three-month cycle means short trials cannot answer that question.

WHERE THE CLAIMS OUTFRAN THE DATA

Trials of 3.5 g daily for six weeks in postmenopausal women report improvements in mood, energy and vasomotor symptoms, but professional guideline bodies judge the evidence insufficient to recommend maca for menopausal symptoms. The three main ecotypes (yellow, red, black) are not interchangeable — black maca has the most male sexual-function research behind it — yet most retail products blend them or do not disclose which is inside.

BOTTOM LINE

Maca is a reasonable, low-risk purchase for one purpose: sexual desire and function, in men or women, including as an adjunct for SSRI-induced sexual dysfunction. Take 1.5–3 g daily of gelatinized Peruvian maca with a named ecotype, with food, and give it 8–12 weeks. It is not a testosterone booster and not a well-supported menopause treatment. Where maca distinguishes itself is what it lacks: no documented drug interactions and no serious adverse-event literature.

SOURCES

1. "Herbal dietary supplements for erectile dysfunction: systematic review and meta-analysis." *J. Tradit. Complement. Med.*, 2025.
2. "Efficacy and Safety of Maca in Patients with Symptoms of Late-Onset Hypogonadism." *World J. Men's Health*, 2023.
3. Drugs.com Professional Monograph. "Maca — uses, dosing, adverse reactions and interactions." 2025.
4. "Maca on semen quality parameters: systematic review and meta-analysis." *Frontiers in Pharmacology*, 2022.

DISCLAIMER, FDA NOTICE & COPYRIGHT — Prepared September 6, 2026

This report is for educational and informational purposes only and does not constitute medical, nutritional, or other professional advice. No reader relationship, including a doctor-patient relationship, is created by your use of this content.

FDA Disclosure: These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. These products are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.

The benefits described are based on published clinical research using specific standardized extracts at clinical doses. Results with other formulations, brands, or dosages may differ, and individual results may vary. The publisher has not independently verified manufacturer claims for any commercial product and is not a licensed healthcare provider, dietitian, or pharmacist.

Supplements may interact with certain medications and may not be appropriate for everyone. The interaction and contraindication information referenced in this report is not exhaustive. Always consult a qualified healthcare professional — and get a full medication review from your physician or pharmacist — before starting any new supplement, especially if you are pregnant, breastfeeding, have a pre-existing medical condition, or are taking prescription medications.

This report reflects research available as of its publication date and may not incorporate more recent findings; the publisher has no obligation to update it. It addresses ingredients as regulated under U.S. law and may not reflect requirements in other jurisdictions. Some ingredients discussed may be subject to additional state-specific warnings (for example, California's Proposition 65) not reproduced here.

Use of the information in this report is at your own risk. To the fullest extent permitted by law, the publisher disclaims all liability for any loss, injury, or damage arising from your use of, or reliance on, this content.

Copyright 2026 Tabby Cat Enterprises, LLC. All rights reserved. Distributed for Consumer Educational Purposes Only.