

3.2.2.3.4.8 Tongkat ali purchase rules

The active ingredients are present in tongkat ali root in miniscule amounts. Used in the traditional manner (in Malaysia and Indonesia), for a typical single standard dose, one needs a full 50 gram of chipped root, boiled for about 5 minutes. That means: more than 10 kg of raw root per month, or even double that much for body builders. But what is sold in health food stores and as tongkat ali health supplement often only provides less than a half gram of tongkat ali root powder per capsule. Of such a product, one would have to swallow more than 100 capsules to get a single effective dose.

Because tongkat ali root is mostly cellulose, purchase rule 1 is: if you buy capsules, only buy tongkat ali extract, not just tongkat ali.

When an extract is made, the active ingredients are extracted from the root, and the remaining cellulose is discarded. Extracts can have various proportions (the amount of active ingredients that is extracted). For example, an extract that is 1:50 gets 1 gram of active ingredients from 50 gram of tongkat ali root. An extract that is 1:100 uses 100 gram of root to produce 1 gram of extract, and a 1:200 extract is even more concentrated. It needs 200 gram of tongkat ali root to prepare just 1 gram of extract. Thus, among the various tongkat ali extracts cited above, 1:200 is the most concentrated and strongest form.

However, if a bottle of capsules just says "Tongkat Ali Extract", without specifying a proportion, then the extract is likely only 1:5, or maybe even only 1:2. This means that only 5, or just 2, gram of tongkat ali root were used to obtain 1 gram of extract. Thus, assuming an equal capsule size, you would need 40 capsules (or, at worst 100 capsules) of such a tongkat ali extract of unspecified strength to obtain as much active ingredient as you can get from just one capsule of 1:200 extract.

Therefore, purchase rule 2 is: only buy an extract that specifies the concentration, 1:50, 1:100, or 1:200. Otherwise, your extract is likely to be so diluted that you are still mostly swallowing cellulose, not active ingredients. Legally, even an extract of 1:2 can be called an extract. But it's almost as bad as root powder. When extract strength

is not specified, the whole extraction process was undertaken only so that “extract” could be written on the label of the product.

Even worse are products that mix tongkat ali with other ingredients, such as arginine, damiana, muira puama, or minerals such as zinc. Arginine, you can buy at 20 dollars a kilo, and that’s enough for something like 4000 capsules, and damiana is a grass that typically isn’t extracted. Most minerals in capsule form are just pharmaceutical junk.

Thus, purchase rule 3 is: if you want to use tongkat ali, buy a product that is not mixed with anything else.

When consumed in proper therapeutic amounts, tongkat ali extract not only works to enhance libido (sexual desire), but also causes increased muscle growth in bodybuilding athletes. Both efficacies have been established in scientific research.

For example, the British Journal of Sports Medicine reported that the use of tongkat ali extract caused a 5 % increase in lean body mass in 5 weeks. The result was obtained in a double-blind placebo controlled scientific trial for a treatment group, while in a control group, no significant changes were observed. 5 % in 5 weeks is a large improvement, as becomes obvious if one calculates it over a course of a year (5 weeks ‘ 5 %; 52 weeks 50 %). The authors conclude: “The results suggest that water soluble extract of *Eurycoma longifolia* Jack increased fat free mass, reduced body fat, and increased muscle strength and size, and thus may have an ergogenic effect.”

The abstract of the clinical trial with healthy men can be read at the website of the British Journal of Sports Medicine:

<http://bjsm.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/37/5/464>

To check for the abstract, you will have to scroll down on the page with the above URL. The abstract that covers tongkat ali’s effect on bodybuilding has the number 007.

Purchase rule 4 is: if ever possible, buy Thai or Indonesian, not Malaysian tongkat ali.

Of course, genuine tongkat ali root is expensive. In Malaysia where tongkat ali meanwhile is a protected plant, they sell a kg of root (2.2 lbs) for up to 50 US dollars. Prices in Indonesia are much lower.

A considerable number of Malaysian tongkat ali products have been intercepted and taken off the shelves by the authorities of several countries for containing bootleg Pfizer's Blue or Lilly's Beige. Instead of purchasing a healthier alternative to prescription drugs, many of those who have used Malaysian tongkat ali not only were fed synthetic chemicals. The synthetic chemicals weren't even produced in a licensed manufacturing unit but cooked up in kitchen labs.

As if stretching with synthetic chemicals weren't enough, Malaysian tongkat ali root also often is contaminated with lead. This is a result of the rapid industrialization the country has experienced over the past decade or two, when it was one of the world's fastest growing economies. Until very recently, the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur were the highest buildings in the world (an expression of Malaysian industrial pride), and even though it has a population of just 20 million inhabitants, Malaysia has a lot of heavy industry. It even produces its own brands of cars, trucks, motorcycles ' an achievement that countries of comparative size even in Europe can't match.

The downside of rapid industrialization: the lead content of a good number Malaysian tongkat ali products has been found to range from 10.64 to 20.72 ppm (parts per million). For comparison, the Indonesian company Sumatra Pasak Bumi has published laboratory test results showing that their own tongkat ali has a lead content of just 0.08 ppm . This means that every gram of the Malaysian tongkat ali named in the abstract of a scientific study (see link below) contained up to 250 times the amount of lead found in Indonesian tongkat ali.

The scientific study, which established these data, was published in the scientific journal Human & Experimental Toxicology, issue of August 2003. An abstract of the study can be read at the following URL:

[http://www.ingentaconnect.com/
search/expand?
pub=infobike://arn/
het/2003/00000022/00000008/
art00006](http://www.ingentaconnect.com/search/expand?pub=infobike://arn/het/2003/00000022/00000008/art00006)