Frequently Asked Questions

1. *What is Ashwagandha?*
   Ashwagandha is an herbal medicine which has been used for centuries in India to improve vitality and mental wellbeing. It is made from root of the plant Withania somnifera. Its traditional uses suggest it could help with some common symptoms of long COVID, such as fatigue, muscle weakness, brain fog, impaired sleep and poor mental health.

2. *Is Ashwagandha safe?*
   Yes, Ashwagandha is considered a safe herbal medicine. It is one of the commonly prescribed medicines in Ayurveda, a traditional Indian system of medicine. In more than 25 clinical studies conducted on Ashwagandha, there have been no reported serious reactions associated with its use. In very few instances, Ashwagandha use has been associated with liver injury, although this is considered very rare and all patients recovered after stopping medication.

3. *Are there any common side effects from taking Ashwagandha?*
   Ashwagandha is generally well tolerated. Some people have reported mild side effects like nausea, diarrhoea and feeling sleepy. Please see Participant Information Sheet for a full listing and explanation of possible side effects.

4. *Can I take Ashwagandha tablets along with other medication?*
   Generally, it is safe to take Ashwagandha tablets along with other medicines. However, it has been suggested that people should avoid taking it with benzodiazepines (common sedative and anti-anxiety medications which include Diazepam (Valium), Alprazolam (Xanax), lorazepam (Ativan)), barbiturates (downers), anti-seizure medications, or other central nervous system depressants. Ask the study team if you are unsure whether you may be taking any of these medications.

5. *Is it safe to take Ashwagandha with high blood pressure medication?*
   It is safe to use Ashwagandha with blood pressure medication. The dose prescribed in this study is not known to affect your blood pressure.

6. *Is it safe to take Ashwagandha with anti-diabetic medication?*
   It is safe to use Ashwagandha with anti-diabetic medication. The dose prescribed in this study is not known to lower your blood sugar.

7. *Ashwagandha is an herbal medicine. How will you ensure the tablets are good quality and really contain what they are meant to contain?*
   High quality Ashwagandha tablets have been specially developed for this trial. A reputed registered drug manufacturing company in India has manufactured them following the UK guidelines and standards.

8. *How should I take Ashwagandha tablets?*
   Swallow the tablets whole and use a glass of warm water to wash them down. When warm water is not available, room temperature water is acceptable. Tablets should be taken twice a day, 2 in the morning and 2 in the evening.

9. *What if I miss taking tablets for a couple of days?*
   There is no need to worry if you miss taking tablets for a day or two. Please keep a record of your tablets in the diary provided along with your trial booklet/medication. For any reason if you miss taking tablets for more than 4 days, please contact Trial Manager on 07510 382 984 or email april@lshtm.ac.uk

10. *Who should I contact in an emergency?*
    For any emergency you must attend your nearest A&E. Trial will provide you a 24x7 emergency contact number for your treating medical doctor to call in case they need information of the trial.

11. *What if I get ill while on Ashwagandha and require hospitalisation?*
    Please contact your study doctor's team, or the trial manager, for advice on continuation of Ashwagandha. Contact numbers will be provided in your personalised trial recruitment pack.

12. *Do I need to have a blood test to take part in this trial?*
    Yes, after signing the Informed Consent Form (ICF) you will need a blood test to check your liver function before you are randomised and start taking trial medication. If you have done a blood test for liver function within the past 3 months before starting trial medication, then these results can be used and you will not need to do a blood test before you start taking trial medication.
    All participants will need to have a blood test after one month of taking the trial medication *and* at the end of the trial. Your study doctor's team will be in touch to arrange these blood tests during the trial.

13. *What amount of blood will be taken per blood test?*
    The amount of blood being taken for each blood test will be approximately 5 ml, i.e., 1 teaspoon.

14. Do I need to use a contraception?

The safety of the trial medication for developing foetuses is not yet known. Therefore, it is required that participants in this trial take measures to prevent pregnancy from occurring. Any people intending to become pregnant during the course of the trial, or who are unwilling to adhere to the required contraception measures, will not be eligible to participate.

Contraception requirements for each of the following groups of participants are outline below:

Group and definition	Contraception requirement
Women of childbearing potential (WOCBP) *defined as all women who are: "fertile, following menarche (first period) and until becoming post-menopausal unless permanently sterile. Permanent sterilisation methods include hysterectomy, bilateral salpingectomy and bilateral oophorectomy"*	At least ONE of the following: - Taking combined hormonal contraception ("the pill") or progestogen-only hormonal contraception ("minipill") - Intrauterine device ("the coil") or intrauterine hormone-releasing system - Bilateral tubal occlusion (female sterilisation) - Vasectomised partner - Condom use or sexual abstinence (defined as "refraining from heterosexual intercourse") during the entire period of risk associated with the study treatments.
Women who do not meet the above definition for WOCBP, including all post-menopausal women. *A postmenopausal state is defined as no menses (period) for 12 months without an alternative medical cause.*	No contraception requirement.
Men aged 18 and above *(all)*	- Condom use during the entire period of risk associated with the study treatments.

Any failure to adhere to the agreed contraception method must be reported to the study team (doctor, nurse, or trial manager) immediately.

15. Do I need to do a pregnancy test?

Yes, all women of childbearing potential (WOCBP) will need to do a urine pregnancy test to confirm they are not pregnant before entering the study, and each month during the study (timepoints listed in table below). The tests will either be done at the clinic by a Research Nurse, or urine pregnancy test kit will be sent home for individuals to do the test at home and report the result to their Research Doctor or Research Nurse.

Urine pregnancy test	Timepoint
1st test	Before starting trial medication
2nd test	After completing 1st month trial medication
3rd test	After completing 2nd month trial medication
4th test	After completing 3rd month trial medication (end of the trial)

16. *What happens if I become pregnant during the study?*

The safety of the study medication, Ashwagandha, for developing foetuses is not yet known. Ashwagandha is already widely used in some countries, and to our knowledge there are no documented cases of pregnancy issues arising due to this medication. However, as a precaution, we want to avoid anyone becoming pregnant while taking this study medication and hence require use of one of the contraception method explained in the Participant Information Sheet.

If you do have a positive pregnancy test during the trial, you will be asked to immediately stop taking the trial medication. We recommend that you inform your doctor and follow their recommendations. Our study doctors will be available to discuss with you and your doctor if you wanted. With your permission, the study team will keep in touch with you during your pregnancy to monitor how things are going.

17. *How long will it take to complete the monthly questionnaire?*

It takes approximately 15-20 minutes to complete the monthly questionnaires. If you are completing them online you will be able to complete them in stages.

18. *Can I take part in this trial if I am participating in another research study?*

You can take part in this trial if you are participating in an observational study (e.g., doing scans or questionnaires, but not taking any medication). However, if you are taking part in another drug study (i.e., any study where, for the purposes of the study, you are being asked to take any medication), then you may not be able to participate. Please check with the APRIL trial team.

19. *What if I have other questions related to participation in this research study?*

Please contact the trial manager (by emailing april@lshtm.ac.uk) or your study doctor's team.

20. *Where can I provide feedback?*

Health related feedback will be collected in the monthly questionnaire. For other feedback please email april@lshtm.ac.uk