particularly various symptoms accompanying chronic stress, are not at all known. Therefore, an objective of the present invention is to provide stress-reducing agents that adjust physical and psychological conditions by inhibiting decrease in immune function and excessive response of the HPA axis due to chronic stress, and by reducing psychological stress represented by a feeling of fatigue, anxiety and/or tension, wherein the agents can be used regularly as a pharmaceutical without side effects, and can be taken in easily as foods, drinks, and the like.

[Means for Solving the Problems]

The present invention demonstrates that *Lactobacillus gasseri* inhibits decrease in immune function and excessive response of the HPA axis due to chronic stress and has the action of reducing psychological stress such as anxiety and/or tension, which were hitherto unknown properties, and that *L. gasseri* is useful as a stress-reducing agent. Furthermore, use of αLA in combination with *Lactobacillus gasseri* was found to reduce daily fatigue that can be felt as one of the symptoms of chronic stress, and was found to be useful as a stress-reducing agent.

The basic characteristics and various embodiments of the present invention are listed below:

[1] a stress-reducing agent comprising *Lactobacillus gasseri* as active ingredient;

[2] the agent of [1], wherein the stress is chronic stress;

[3] the agent of [1] or [2], which further comprises α-lactalbumin (αLA) as active ingredient;

[4] *Lactobacillus gasseri* which has a stress-reducing action;

[5] the *Lactobacillus gasseri* of [4], which has the action of suppressing increase in stress hormone in blood;

[6] the *Lactobacillus gasseri* of [4] or [5], which has the action of suppressing increase in adrenocorticotrophic hormone in blood and/or glucocorticoid in blood;

[7] a composition comprising 1 x 10^7 or more of *Lactobacillus gasseri* cells and 40 wt% or more of αLA;

[8] the agent of any one of [1] to [3], wherein the *Lactobacillus gasseri* is *Lactobacillus gasseri* OLL2809 deposited under the accession number NITE BP-72;

[9] the *Lactobacillus gasseri* of any one of [4] to [6], which is deposited under the accession number NITE BP-72;

[10] the composition of [7], wherein the *Lactobacillus gasseri* is *Lactobacillus gasseri* OLL2809 deposited under the accession number NITE BP-72; [10a] In one aspect the present invention refers to a non-therapeutic method of reducing stress, comprising administering *Lactobacillus gasseri* and α-lactalbumin (αLA) to the subject in need thereof, wherein the *Lactobacillus gasseri* is *Lactobacillus gasseri* OLL2809 deposited under the accession number NITE BP-72. [11] Also disclosed herein is a method of reducing stress, which uses ~~Use of stress-reducing agent comprising *Lactobacillus gasseri* as active ingredient in the manufacture of a medicament for reducing stress~~; [12] the ~~use~~ method of [11], wherein the stress is chronic stress; [13] the ~~use~~ method of [11] or [12]~~, wherein the medicament further comprises~~ which additionally uses αLA; and [14] the ~~use~~ method of any one of [11] to [13], wherein the *Lactobacillus gasseri* is ~~*Lactobacillus gasseri* OLL2809 deposited under the accession number NITE BP-72. Further disclosed herein is a method for reducing stress, which uses Lactobacillus gasseri; wherein the stress is chronic stress; which additionally uses αLA and wherein the *Lactobacillus gasseri* is *Lactobacillus*~~

CLAIMS

1. A non-therapeutic method of reducing stress, comprising administering *Lactobacillus gasseri* and α–lactalbumin (αLA) to the subject in need thereof, wherein the *Lactobacillus gasseri* is *Lactobacillus gasseri* OLL2809 deposited under the accession number NITE BP-72.

2. The non-therapeutic method of claim 1, wherein the stress is chronic stress.

CLAIMS

1. A stress-reducing agent comprising *Lactobacillus gasseri* as active ingredient.

2. The agent of claim 1, wherein the stress is chronic stress.

3. The agent of claim 1 or 2, which further comprises α-lactalbumin (αLA) as active ingredient.

4. *Lactobacillus gasseri* which has a stress-reducing action.

5. The *Lactobacillus gasseri* of claim 4, which has the action of suppressing increase in stress hormone in blood.

6. The *Lactobacillus gasseri* of claim 4 or 5, which has the action of suppressing increase in adrenocorticotrophic hormone in blood and/or glucocorticoid in blood.

7. A composition comprising 1 x 10^7 or more of *Lactobacillus gasseri* cells and 40 wt% or more of αLA.

8. The agent of any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the *Lactobacillus gasseri* is *Lactobacillus gasseri* OLL2809 deposited under the accession number NITE BP-72.

9. The *Lactobacillus gasseri* of any one of claims 4 to 6, which is deposited under the accession number NITE BP-72.

10. The composition of claim 7, wherein the *Lactobacillus gasseri* is *Lactobacillus gasseri* OLL2809 deposited under the accession number NITE BP-72.

11. Use of stress-reducing agent comprising *Lactobacillus gasseri* as active ingredient in the manufacture of a medicament for reducing stress.

12. The use of claim 11, wherein the stress is chronic stress.

13. The use of claim 11 or 12, wherein the medicament further comprises αLA.

14. The use of any one of claims 11 to 13, wherein the *Lactobacillus gasseri* is

Lactobacillus gasseri OLL2809 deposited under the accession number NITE BP-72.