



Research Suggests That Maitake Mushroom Can Boost The Immune System And More

Found growing on trunks or stumps of trees in deciduous forests in temperate climates, the maitake mushroom is native to Eastern Canada and the Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic regions of the United States. Maitake also can be found thriving in northeastern Japan and parts of Europe. With fan-shaped caps on stalks that may be fused together in masses, the mature maitake plant can weight up to twenty pounds. Also called dancing mushroom because of people dancing for joy when they found the maitake mushroom, one legend explains that the name refers to the fact that maitake overlaps other forms of fungi and has the appearance of butterfly wings flapping in a dance.

Only thirty years ago this type of mushroom had yet to become cultivated or well-known. Before 1979 maitake could only be found in the wild. However, now cultivation techniques have made it possible for maitake to be enjoyed all over the world, with some Japanese research finding that it is useful for the healing of a variety of ailments. Maitake is quickly becoming more and more important in the field of natural health. Like other mushrooms, maitake is rich in polysaccharides, which are complex natural sugars that have great benefits in healing as they work to strengthen the immune system to help it fight disease. Beta D-glucan is the powerful polysaccharide that is found in maitake, a compound that helps to stimulate the immune response.

Studies have found that maitake mushroom has the ability to reduce blood pressure in laboratory experiments that took place on animals. A study that was conducted in 1994 at the Ayurvedic Medical Center of New York found that maitake can also be of great value for humans too. This study, which involved individuals who had mild to moderate hypertension, was performed on eleven volunteers. Each volunteer was given three 500 mg doses of maitake twice a day for one month.

The results showed that blood pressure was reduced by 5 to 20 percent. Maitake may also be able to help lower blood cholesterol levels, which is a major factor in fighting and preventing heart disease. Several studies on humans have found impressive results, with three out of four patients with hypertension showing reduction in blood pressure after taking three to five grams of maitake each day.

Maitake also contains properties that are able to protect the liver from damage and even potentially reverse the damage that has already occurred. Demonstrating a hepato-protective effect, maitake works against toxins and potential liver damage. It has also been found to help protect the liver from harmful effects of hepatitis, as a group of thirty-



two chronic hepatitis-B patients were studied. Each patient was give maitake extract, with the results showing that 72 percent recovered while only 57 percent of the group the used traditional therapy recovered.

As cancer continues to be leading cause of death in the western world, Human studies are beginning to find that D-fraction polysaccharides in maitake mushroom can help to treat various types of cancer. D-fraction seems to inhibit carcinogenesis and metastatis. Maitake also seems to help to lessen the severity of treatments that are hard on the body and produce debilitating side effects.

Finally, maitake was also the first mushroom that was found to inhibit the activity of HIV in laboratory studies, as it possesses the ability to kill the HIV virus. It stimulates T-cell action and prevents T-cells from being destroyed by HIV cells. Maitake is valuable for increasing the lifespan of individuals who are infected with HIV, but also there quality of life as it may help to slow the development of AIDS symptoms.



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