

ASTRAGALUS

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Astragalus Attacks Invaders

For centuries, humans have relied on astragalus (*Astragalus membranaceus*), garlic and medicinal mushrooms to bolster immune function, and current research supports their traditional use. For optimal immunity, use one or more of these herbs regularly. A delicious way to take them is in the form of a tonic soup (see "Immune-Building Herbal Tonic Soup" on opposite page).

A member of the pea family, astragalus root has been used for more than 2,000 years in Traditional Chinese Medicine as a popular tonic for strengthening vitality and to bolster resistance to disease. Today, researchers are trying to scientifically validate the herb's reputation as an immune enhancer.

Studies show that astragalus improves immune function in several ways. It triggers **the** creation of immune cells in bone marrow and lymphatic tissue; it prods immune cells—including natural killer cells and mac-rophages—into increased activity; and it enhances the production of immune compounds, such as immunoglobulin. Components of astragalus, such as polysaccharides (large, complex sugar molecules that enhance immune activity), along with saponins and flavonoids, have been found to shield cells against the free radical damage that leads to degenerative diseases, such as cancer.

In China, researchers have conducted dozens of studies on astragalus with promising results. For example, in a 1997 study, researchers found that giving astragalus to elderly mice (36 and 60 weeks old) restored immune function to that of 10-week-old mice. And in a 1995 clinical trial, 115 patients with low white blood cell counts took either 10 grams or 30 grams of a concentrated astragalus extract daily. Both groups experienced a significant increase in white blood cell counts after eight weeks of treatment.

Astragalus is available in a variety of forms including the dried root, capsules and liquid extracts. In Traditional Chinese Medicine, astragalus often is made into a tea, or slices of the root are simmered in soup. Because bolstering immune function is key to preventing any type of illness or health problem, astragalus often is combined with a variety of other herbs prescribed for various specific conditions.

In Western herbalism, astragalus is generally taken as an extract or in capsules. Because preparations vary in potency, follow package directions for best results.

http://www.cancerchecklist.com/herbal_remedies/herb_index.html

ASTRAGALUS In the United States, astragalus has been investigated as a possible treatment for patients whose immune systems have been compromised by chemotherapy or radiation. Astragalus supplements have been shown to speed recovery and extend life expectancy in these patients." University of Maryland Medical Center

This herb, also known as Huang ch'i, may help fight cancer by stimulating the immune system. When researchers at the University of Texas Medical Center mixed astragalus with the blood of cancer patients in a test tube, the function of cancer-killing cells called T lymphocytes improved by 260 percent. However, the American Cancer Society says there is no convincing scientific evidence that astragalus helps to fight cancer or mitigate the effects of chemotherapy.

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Also known as milk vetch, is a POWERFUL IMMUNE SYSTEM stimulant in the same class as echinacea. Research shows that it increases T-Cell production in the body. The Chinese consider it an energy or chi enhancing tonic for the lungs and spleen. It builds the blood, promotes urination, reduces edema, promotes the discharge of pus, helps to increase muscle mass and body tone, lowers blood pressure, increases endurance, and increases bone marrow reserves. The traditional indications for this herb include lack of appetite, fatigue, diarrhea, spontaneous sweating frequent colds, shortness of breath, chronic sores and ulcerations, weakness and heart palpitations. It has been used to treat abscess, arthritic pain and numbness, asthma, boils, common cold, edema, hard to heal sores and wounds, inflammation, loss of appetite, muscle numbness, nephritis, night sweats, uterine bleeding,

. It also boosts defense mechanisms for those undergoing chemotherapy.

Use Astragalus in soup, stocks, tincture or grind for a root beverage.