

From our friends at "Back to Herbs"



eFlash



## Reishi Mushroom

*Ganoderma lucidum*

The reishi mushroom literally "supernatural mushroom" encompasses several fungal species of the genus *Ganoderma*, and most commonly refers to *Ganoderma lucidum*. *G. lucidum* enjoys special veneration in East Asia, where it has been used as a medicinal mushroom in traditional Chinese medicine for more than 2,000 years, making it one of the oldest mushrooms known to have been used medicinally. Because of reishi's health benefits and apparent absence of side effects, it has attained a reputation in the East as the ultimate herbal substance. It is listed in the American Herbal Pharmacopoeia and Therapeutic Compendium.



Reishi is a purely medicinal mushroom, not a culinary one, both because it is hard and woody and because it tastes very bitter. Red Reishi is primarily composed of complex carbohydrates called water-soluble polysaccharides, triterpenoids, proteins and amino acids. Preliminary studies indicate triterpenes, called ganoderic acids help alleviate common allergies by inhibiting histamine release, improve oxygen utilization and improve liver functions. Triterpenes are bitter in taste and the level of the triterpene content contained in a product can be determined by the bitterness.

Reishi also contains carbohydrates, fiber, steroids, lipids, alkaloids, glucoside, coumarin glycoside, volatile oil, vitamin B2 (riboflavin), and ascorbic acid. It also contains the minerals: calcium, zinc, magnesium, copper, and germanium.

The polysaccharides in reishi mushrooms appear to activate a type of white blood cell known as a macrophage. These cells filter the blood, destroying cancer cells, viruses, bacteria, and other large particulate material. Macrophages also signal other white blood cells to seek out and destroy tumor cells.

Generally, reishi is recommended as an adaptogen, immune modulator, and a general tonic enhancing health and normal functions of the body. For example, while it increases some components of the immune response to cancers, it also inhibits pathological immune functions in autoimmune diseases. Reishi is also used to help treat anxiety, high blood pressure, bronchitis, insomnia, and asthma and to improve liver function including hepatitis.

Reishi mushroom may possess anti-tumor, immunomodulatory and immunotherapeutic activities, supported by studies on polysaccharides, terpenes, and other bioactive compounds isolated from fruiting bodies and mycelia of this fungus. It has also been found to inhibit platelet aggregation, and to lower blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar. For protection from heart disease and stroke, experts believe that the ganoderic acids in particular lowers triglyceride levels, removes excess cholesterol from the blood, lowers blood pressure, reduces platelet stickiness and even help correct arrhythmia.

An immunostimulant, it is helpful for people with AIDS, leaky gut syndrome, Epstein-Barr, chronic bronchitis, and other infectious viruses. Reishi is an antioxidant that protects the body from the harmful effects of radiation and free radicals. Dr. Terry Willard, a proponent of the medical uses of this mushroom, maintains that reishi decreases free radicals by 50.4 percent through an as yet, unidentified antioxidant. Other researchers suspect that reishi may not have an antioxidant of its own but rather stimulates production of the body's own free radical scavenger, an enzyme called superoxide dismutase (SOD).

It treats immune disorders including AIDS as it raises the T cell levels (an index of AIDS and immune disorders). It is also specific for Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. It inhibits bacteria and viruses, treats cancer and tumors and its adaptogenic quality protects the body against stress.

Reishi mushrooms are often taken as a general tonic and also for the following specific conditions:

- Cancer (including leukemia and lymphoma)
- Cardiovascular health
- Allergies
- Asthma
- Bronchitis
- As a preventative right before and during flu season
- HIV/AIDS
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Inflammatory conditions
- Chronic fatigue syndrome
- Anxiety
- Insomnia
- Diabetes
- Hepatitis
- Radiation poisoning
- Candida infections

In Japan, the dried "mycelium" of Reishi the root-like body that produces mushrooms has been found to be highly effective in the treatment of neuroses caused by "environmental stress". In addition, in an eight-month study of Alzheimer's disease, patients taking a Reishi mycelium product demonstrated significant improvement.

In China, Reishi is used for its muscle relaxing and analgesic (pain-inhibiting) effects. In one study, Reishi alleviated anxiety in 18 of 20 patients after four months' use. It was concluded that the mushroom has an essentially "calmative function", but is neither a narcotic nor a hypnotic.

The mechanisms by which *G. lucidum* may affect cancer are unknown and they may target different stages of cancer development: inhibition of angiogenesis (formation of

new, tumor-induced blood vessels, created to supply nutrients to the tumor), cytotoxicity, inhibiting migration of the cancer cells and metastasis, and inducing and enhancing apoptosis (cell suicide) of tumor cells. Nevertheless, *G. lucidum* extracts are already used in commercial pharmaceuticals such as MC-S for suppressing cancer cell proliferation and migration.

This immune-boosting action also works wonders in the prevention and treatment of cancer, as the T-cells are then able to fight cancer cells more effectively. However, reishi may help the body defeat cancer in not just one, but four ways. In addition to boosting the immune system, the glucan in reishi helps immune cells bind to tumor cells. Many experts believe that it also actually reduces the number of cancerous cells, making it easier for T-cells and macrophages to rid the body of them. Another substance in reishi, called canthaxanthin, slows down the growth of tumors

A considerable number of studies in Japan, China, USA and the UK in the past 30 years have shown that the consumption of red Reishi has been linked to the treatment of a vast range of diseases, common ailments, and conditions. Most of the scientific research that has been conducted appears to strongly support red reishi's role as a normalizing substance - a nutritional supplement that can yield medical benefits through its normalization and regulation of the body's organs and functions.

For the past decade, reishi has also been used as a cancer treatment in Japan, with some success. reishi appears to inhibit cancer via its beneficial effect on the immune system. Compounds in reishi can boost immune function by activating macrophages and T-cells, the disease-fighting cells that help rid the body of all foreign invaders, including viruses, bacteria, and cancer cells. Studies done at the Cancer Research Center in Moscow have found reishi to act as a host defense protector. It helps the body to fight cancer and slow down tumor growth.

Reishi mushroom is non-toxic and can be taken daily without producing any side effects.

One interesting and important finding by Dr. Morishige was that the effectiveness of Reishi could be increased by combining it with high doses of vitamin C. Polysaccharides are huge molecules absorbed by the body with difficulty. Vitamin C helps to break down these huge molecules into much smaller molecules called oligoglucan, which can be easily absorbed. Vitamin C thus increases the bioavailability of reishi in the body.



Be sure to try NSP's Immune Stimulator (90 caps), Sunshine Heroes Elderberry Immune (90 Soft Chews) or Adaptamax® (100 caps).

## References:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lingzhi\\_mushroom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lingzhi_mushroom)  
<http://www.naturalnews.com/021498.html>  
<http://www.reishi.com/what-is-reishi.htm>

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**Yours in Good Health!**

Sincerely,

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