

# Topic of the Week

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WE CARE ABOUT YOUR HEALTH

## Medicinal Secrets of the Magnificent Mushroom

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On September 19, 1991, two German tourists hiking in the Alps came across what would become one of the greatest anthropological finds of the twentieth century. On a mountainside they discovered the mummified remains of a 5,000-year-old man – much of his body preserved by ice and snow. Among this ancient iceman's belongings were mushrooms. Experts believe the iceman used the mushrooms to soothe discomfort caused by the intestinal parasites found in his body. Could this be evidence that mushrooms are one of the world's oldest natural medicines?

For most of Western history, mushrooms have been used primarily as a food source.

But the mushroom has a much different reputation in other areas of the world. It has long been part of traditional medicine in Asia. The Chinese goddess of healing is often depicted holding a reishi mushroom – evidence of the high stature of the mushroom in Chinese medicine. In China and Japan, herbal doctors use mushrooms to treat numerous ailments, such as stomach and intestinal problems.

Mushrooms contain many vital nutrients, including protein, potassium, copper, niacin and folate. They're also a good source of fiber.

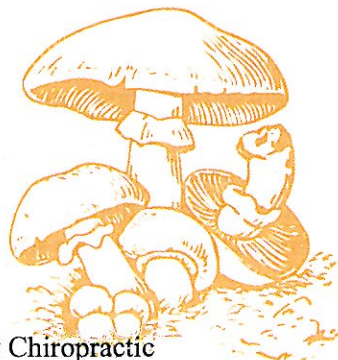
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While used medicinally in Asia for thousands of years, mushrooms have been analyzed by Western medicine only in the last 50 years. Hundreds of studies have looked at the role of mushrooms in treating cancer, cholesterol, high blood pressure and providing immune support. What we need now are large scale human trials.

We know that antioxidants are important in defending the body against disease. Certain varieties of mushrooms are higher in antioxidants than carrots, green beans or red peppers. Research conducted by Penn State University in 2005 discovered that mushrooms are 12 times higher in the antioxidant ergothioneine than wheat germ - previously considered one of the two highest sources of this antioxidant.

We can't cover the health benefits of all mushrooms because there are nearly 40,000 varieties. But here's what we've discovered about the best known medicinal mushrooms.



### Exercise of the Week

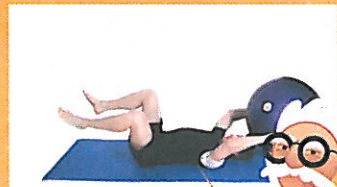
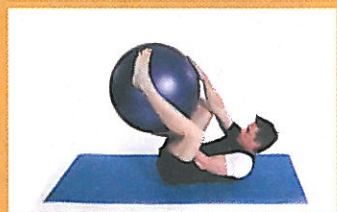
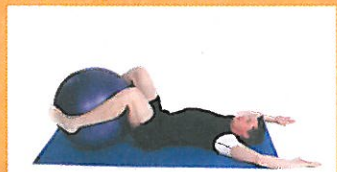
Exercise Ball Exchange with Core Stabilization

Difficulty: Moderate to Advanced

*(Consult your chiropractor before engaging in this or any other exercise.)*

**Start:** Lying on back, with ball positioned between lower legs. Knees can be bent or legs can be straight. Arms positioned over head. Raise legs off floor to point where lower back can be pressed flat, with stomach in and abdominals engaged.

**Exercise:** Bring knees toward chest, and simultaneously reach for ball with your hands. Grab ball with both hands, then lower legs/arms to starting position. Keep lower back pressed into floor, abdominals contracted throughout the entire movement. Arms/legs only lower as long as you can keep lower back flattened against floor. Repeat movement, this time placing ball back between legs, then return to starting position. Repeat 5-10 times.



**Maitake** - Studies confirm maitake activates various immune cells, such as natural killer (NK) cells that attack cancer. Animal studies show it may prove especially important against cancer of the skin, bladder, stomach and bone. It also seems to play a role in helping to stop cancer from spreading to other areas of the body.

**Shiitake** - For almost 40 years, research on this species of mushroom shows it helps the liver speed cholesterol processing, thereby reducing levels. Substances found in shiitake mushrooms can be formidable opponents against HIV. They may block HIV from disrupting the body's virus fighting T cells. Like the maitake, the shiitake mushroom appears to be a potent anti-cancer nutrient. As well as its delicious taste, the shiitake is low in glucose and sodium but rich in potassium and zinc.

The U.S. Agricultural Research Service released a study last year that shows the way shiitake is grown may impact its medicinal power. When it's grown on logs, the shiitake mushroom contains up to 70 percent more high-molecular-weight polysaccharides, which boost immune function.<sup>1</sup>



**Reishi** - It's shown to be effective in reducing coughing and treating respiratory problems like asthma. Because of its anti-inflammatory properties, the reishi mushroom is widely used in Asia for treating arthritis. The Chinese and Japanese believe it can also elevate mood and heightens a person's spirituality.

**Oyster** - This mushroom could be a powerful ally in cardiovascular health. Scientists discovered the oyster mushroom is a natural source of the drug lovastatin, a cholesterol lowering medication.<sup>2</sup>

**Portabella and Criminis** - These two species of mushrooms are high in the antioxidant ergothioneine.



**White Button** - It's the most consumed mushroom species in North America. The white button was believed to have few medicinal properties compared to its cousins like shiitake, maitake and reishi. But new research from France found "the radical scavenging properties of the button mushroom are comparable to other edible mushrooms..."<sup>3</sup>

And here's some more good news about mushrooms: they're able to retain most of their antioxidant properties when cooked. So next time you're in the produce section be sure to add plenty of mushrooms to your shopping cart.

## Quote of the Week

"He enjoys true leisure who has time to improve his soul's estate."  
- Henry David Thoreau



## References and Sources:

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2. Gunde-Cimerman N, Cimerman A. (Mar 1995), "Pleurotus fruiting bodies contain the inhibitor of 3-hydroxy-3-methylglutaryl-coenzyme A reductase-lovastatin." - *Exp Mycol. 19 (1): 1-6, doi:10.1006/emyc.1995.100.*
3. "Radical-scavenging properties of extracts from the white button mushroom, *Agaricus bisporus*" - *Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture, Volume 88 Issue 6, Pages 970 - 975.*
4. Morningstar MW, Woggon D & Lawrence G. Scoliosis Treatment Using a Combination of Manipulative and Rehabilitative Therapy: A Retrospective Case Series. *BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders. 2004 Sep 14; 5: 32.*



## Topic of the Week

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