

Astragalus membranaceus

Astragalus is a herbaceous perennial plant of the pea family and is most commonly used for immune enhancement. Most research on astragalus has focused on its immunostimulatory activity and its seemingly remarkable ability to restore the activity of a suppressed immune system. Clinical trials as well as pharmacological data provide evidence for its usefulness in the prevention of the common cold and as an adjunct to cancer therapies. It may be useful as a complementary treatment during chemotherapy, radiation therapy and immune deficiency syndromes. Astragalus is used to strengthen the immune system over time, building resistance to illness and disease. Echinacea may be used in conjunction with astragalus to provide an extra short term boost in immunity.

There is also evidence for cardiovascular system improvement, particularly in clinical parameters associated with angina, congestive heart failure and acute myocardial infarct. This may be due to the herb's antioxidant activity. Its use in the treatment of hepatitis in modern Chinese medicine is supported by the demonstration of hepatoprotective activity in animal studies.

Astragalus is often used in combination with other botanicals and is very seldom used as a single agent. Pharmacological research of astragalus in combination with ligustrum (*Ligustrum lucidum*) provides evidence for activity against cancers of the breast, cervix and lung.

A number of clinical studies have been reported regarding the use of astragalus for colds and upper respiratory infections.

Administration of astragalus, given either orally or as a nasal spray may decrease the incidence of illness and shorten the length of its course.

Studies indicate astragalus can increase metabolism and energy, boost stamina and promote healing. Other uses of astragalus; atherosclerosis, hypertension, hyperthyroidism, insomnia, diabetes, chronic hepatitis, genital herpes, AIDS and chemotherapy side effects. If you have a serious condition you should consult your doctor, but astragalus is considered safe and free of harmful effects.