

Fantastic Fungi

Feel amazing from the inside out with medicinal mushrooms // BY MICHELE BURKLUND, ND

Medicinal mushrooms have a profound healing power, and were used thousands of years ago by the Greeks, Egyptians, and Chinese as a means to promote longevity. These beneficial fungi offer a vast range of potentially therapeutic uses including enhancing immunity, improving cardiovascular health, promoting detoxification, boosting mood, improving digestion, stimulating memory, and nourishing the body.

What makes these "magic" mushrooms so unique? For one thing, fungi and humans are actually more closely related biologically than fungi and plants. Perhaps that's why they make us feel so good! Here's a quick guide to a few of our favorites:

Chaga (*Inonotus obliquus*): Often referred to as the "king of medicinal mushrooms," chaga is hailed as a superfood because of its powerful ability to support the immune system with beneficial constituents such as beta glucans, melanin, betulinic acid, and superoxide dismutase. Chaga's micronutrients have also been proven to exhibit antiaging properties that offer cellular protection against DNA damage. This mushroom is found growing in forests in the northern hemisphere on birch trees. Infuse it into a tea with cinnamon and vanilla, or take it as a tincture or in capsule form.

Use it for: Fighting colds and flu; supporting the immune system; managing stress; nourishing skin and hair; rejuvenating the body.
Looking for enhanced immune support? Combine chaga with turkey tail mushroom for a powerful synergistic response.

Cordyceps (*Cordyceps sinensis*): For thousands of years cordyceps has been used in Tibetan, Chinese, and Ayurvedic

did you know...
Turkey Tail (shown here) boosted immune function in women with breast cancer, according to a recent study.

medicine to promote vitality. This hardy mushroom is found in the mountainous regions of the Himalayas, where it thrives in a low-oxygen environment. Its ability to flourish in even the harshest conditions provides cordyceps with unique properties to support endurance training and enhance oxygen capacity. A pilot study published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* found that cordyceps enhances exercise and contributes to overall wellness in healthy people between the ages of 50 and 75. Mix these tasty mushrooms into chicken soup, use them as a garnish for salads, or take in capsule form.

Use it for: Enhancing athletic performance and endurance; supporting the body's ability to uptake oxygen; boosting energy and vitality; supporting the liver and kidneys; promoting healthy sexual function.

Shiitake (*Lentinus edodes*): Rich in nutrients, protein, flavor, and medicinal properties, this mushroom has been a prized food in Asia for many years. It has been studied for its ability to lower cholesterol, support immune function,

fight viruses, and promote a healthy cardiovascular system. Shiitake mushrooms are also part of a proprietary Japanese mushroom extract called AHCC—or active hexose correlated compound—which has been shown to enhance immunity and increase the activity of natural killer cells. Found in most grocery stores across North America, these tasty mushrooms can be a delicious addition to a vegetable stir-fry or sautéed with garlic to enhance their rich, smoky flavor.
Use it for: Supporting cardiovascular health; promoting overall immune function; enhancing healthy liver function.

Turkey Tail (*Trametes versicolor*): This is one of the most common mushrooms found in North America, and also the most studied for its impressive immune-stimulating properties. You won't be able to miss these beauties where they sprout from dead trees. Their rich hues

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of brown, orange, maroon, green, and blue all resemble a turkey's feathers. A molecule called P5K is unique to this mushroom and provides much of its potent immune-stimulating properties. A recent study conducted by Bastyr University and the University of Minnesota along with the NIH found that turkey tail dramatically boosted the overall immune function of women with stages I-III breast cancer. Make a delicious turkey tail tea, or take it as a capsule or tincture. **Use it for:** Optimizing immune function; fighting viral infections; reducing inflammation in the body. **Want a comprehensive immune-building approach?** Try 5tamest 7 by Host Defense Mushrooms, which combines seven medicinal mushrooms for maintaining peak health.

Lion's Mane (*Hericium erinaceus*): This mushroom is best known for its neuroprotective effects, which can support memory, improve cognition, and balance mood. In fact, a 2009 double-blind, placebo-controlled study published in the *Journal of Phytotherapy Research* found that subjects taking this mushroom performed significantly better than those given the placebo in cognitive function tests. It can be easily identified by its Latin name, which means "hedgehog" due to its white color and cascading teeth-like spines. **Use it for:** Nerve regeneration; mood support and balancing; improving memory; enhancing concentration. **Want a super brain boost?** Combine brain-supporting herbs such as gotu kola, bacopa, and rosemary with lion's mane mushrooms.

product PICKS

Host Defense MyCommunity
Lion's Mane Super Lion's Mane
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Michelle Burkund, ND, graduated from the prestigious Bastyr University in Seattle. "I have no doubt that the power of natural healing can enhance anyone's life at whatever stage or age they are," says Burkund, who specializes in helping neurological patients. Visit healthyfashionista.com to learn more about Burkund and read her entertaining and informative blogs.

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