Mushrooms: The Underestimated Super Food

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(NaturalNews) Mushrooms have been used for thousands of years by traditional eastern healers but only recently by western healers in advanced medicine. Mushrooms are often classified as a vegetable or an herb, but they are actually fungi.

Mushrooms provide our bodies with the nutrients, proteins, minerals, and vitamins it needs to generate energy and repair cells. They are one of the most remarkable elements for a healthy immune system. They have been used to cure or improve eyesight, hearing, circulation, impotency, stop migraine headaches, tumors, influenza, and even cancer.

Mushrooms are low in carbohydrates, calories, and sodium and are cholesterol and fat free. High in fiber and protein, mushrooms are also rich in B vitamins to help maintain a healthy metabolism.

Mushrooms are an excellent source of potassium, a mineral that helps lower elevated blood pressure and reduces the risk of stroke. One medium portabella mushroom has even more potassium than a banana or a glass of orange juice.

Mushrooms are a rich source of riboflavin, niacin, and selenium. Selenium is an antioxidant that works with vitamin E to protect cells from the damaging effects of free radicals. Male health professionals who consumed twice the recommended daily intake of selenium cut their risk of prostate cancer by 65 percent.

Regular ingestion of mushrooms over long periods of time has been proven to decrease the amount of cancerous cells in the body. They not only fight and reduce cancerous cells and tumors, but they help prevent more of those cells from forming in the body.

Types of Mushrooms and their Therapeutic Value:

Oyster
Oyster mushrooms are used to strengthen veins and relax tendons. “Tendon-easing powder” is an effective treatment for numbed limbs as well as tendon and blood vessel discomfort. Dried Oyster Mushrooms are high in iron which makes them a good blood builder.

Portabella
Portabellas contain a wide variety of B complex vitamins. They are also a great source of riboflavin, Pantothenic acid, niacin and a good source of thiamine, vitamin B6, folate, selenium, lysine, protein, zinc, copper, manganese, and iron.

Morels
Morels contain protein, vitamin D and B, riboflavin, niacin, and thiamine that help the body maintain a healthy metabolism. They also have copper, selenium, and potassium. They are low in carbohydrates, very low in calories and are fat free, not to mention, they contain very little sodium.

Maitake
Maitake may best be known for its cancer-fighting properties. The evidence confirming maitake’s therapeutic value is impressive. Laboratory studies have shown that maitake extract can block the growth of cancer tumors and boost the immune function of mice with cancer. Maitake mushroom was found effective against leukemia and stomach and bone cancers. In addition, many doctors in Japan use maitake mushroom to lower blood pressure and blood lipids. This mushroom has also been reported to aid digestion by regulating the stomach and intestines, and helps eliminate food stagnation.
Porcini
Just like Morels, Porcini mushrooms contain copper, selenium, potassium, and protein.

Shiitake
Research has shown that Shiitake lowers cholesterol. Shiitake also appears to be effective against some of the more serious viruses we face today: HIV and hepatitis B and appears to be a formidable cancer fighter.

Reishi
Reishi mushroom is particularly beneficial for individuals with asthma and other respiratory complaints. Reishi is good for respiratory strength and for coughing. At least one population study confirms this claim. When more the 2000 Chinese with chronic bronchitis took reishi syrup during the 1970s, within two weeks, 60 to 90% felt better and reported an improved appetite, according to the article Medicinal Mushrooms by Christopher Hobbs, published in Herbs for Health, Jan/Feb 97.

Scientific Research:
Several scientists addressed the health benefits of mushrooms in a session in July 2008 at the Institute of Food Technologists Annual Meeting and Food Expo in New Orleans.

Mushrooms are low in calories, cholesterol and sodium, and they provide plenty of fiber and flavor when cooked. But the big news is that they are high in antioxidants, selenium, riboflavin and other healthful substances that protect the immune system and fight cancer.

Mushrooms contain high amounts of beta-glucans, compounds that occur in the bran of cereal grains and in yeast. These substances help to keep immune cells in a state of vigilance, guarding against disease, said Lana Zivanovic, Ph.D., with the University of Tennessee's Department of Food Science and Technology.

Mushrooms also contain cancer-fighting substances, said Shiuan Chen, Ph.D., director of surgical research at the Beckman Research Institute in Duarte, Calif.

Chen's lab experiments show that mushrooms' cells contain mechanisms that suppress breast and prostate cancer cells. He is following up his lab work with clinical trials funded by the Mushroom Council. Results should be out in a year, he said.

Research is showing that mushrooms contain ergothioneine, an antioxidant that contributes to immune support and protection of the eyes, skin, liver, kidneys and bone marrow.

Scientists have unearthed other mushroom benefits including robust amounts of selenium, vitamin D and potassium. "White button mushrooms have more protein, potassium, copper and selenium than oyster or shiitake mushrooms", said Robert Beelman, Ph.D., at Pennsylvania State University's Department of Food Science. Whether mushrooms will be consumed more as foods or in supplements and extractions is yet to be seen. "But a rich opportunity exists in the marketplace", said Zivanovic.

Sources:
Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) (http://www.ift.org)
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Leslee Dru Browning is a 6th generation Medical Herbalist & Nutritionist from the ancestral line of Patty Bartlett Sessions; Pioneer Mid-Wife & Herbalist. Leslee practiced Medical Herbalism and Nutritional Healing for over 25 years and specialized in Cancer Wellness along with Chronic Illness. She now devotes her career to teaching people, through her writing, about Natural Healing from An Herbal Perspective.