

found that astragalus was able to completely restore the function of cancer patients' compromised immune cells. Finally, research has also shown that astragalus protects the liver from a variety of liver toxins, such as carbon tetrachloride and the anticancer compound stilbenemide. The liver is an important organ in the body's immune support system.

A good way to use astragalus for medicine is to make it into a soup stock or to cook rice in a strong astragalus infusion or tea. Astragalus is quite tasty and has been used this way throughout the world for many thousands of years. The sliced root should be removed after cooking and discarded, as it is too fibrous to eat.

Preparation and Dosage

Astragalus may be taken as tea, in capsules, as tincture, or in food.

Tea: 2 to 3 ounces (50 to 75 g) of herb to a pot of tea; drink throughout the day.

Capsules: Grind herb to powder and encapsulate; take 3 capsules 3 times a day as immune tonic.

Tincture: 1:5 with 60 percent alcohol, 30 to 60 drops up to 4 times a day.

Food: Two of the best ways to use astragalus as food are as a broth base for soups and as a rice (see recipe box).

Side Effects and Contraindications

No toxicity has ever been shown from the ingestion of astragalus. And the Chinese report consistent use for millennia in the treatment of colds and flu and suppressed immune function. This is certainly one of the top herbs to use to restore a depressed or damaged immune system.

Alterantives to Astragalus

Ashwagandha, Siberian ginseng, shiitake mushroom.

Purchasing Astragalus

Astragalus can be quite expensive when purchased from herbal suppliers or health food stores. The same product can be purchased from most Chinese or Asian markets, sometimes for as little as one-tenth the price charged by herbal marketers.