

**Alternatives to Ashwagandha**

Siberian ginseng, astragalus, ginseng (for those over 40), and two other *Withania* species: *W. coagulans* and *W. obtusifolia*.


**ASTRAGALUS** (*Astragalus membranaceus*)

**Family:** Leguminosae.

**Part used:** The plant is a perennial with a long fibrous root stock. The root is used for medicine.

**Collection:** The plant grows in Asia and is primarily harvested in China, having been used in Chinese medicine for millennia. The root is thinly sliced and dried, and it most closely resembles a yellow tongue depressor.

**Actions:** Immune enhancer, stimulant, and restorative; antiviral; adaptogenic; tonic; diuretic; enhances function in lungs, spleen, and digestion.

**Active against:** *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Salmonella* spp., *Proteus mirabilis*.

**About Astragalus**

Astragalus has been found to be exceptionally effective for the immune system. Clinical studies have shown that astragalus both protects the human heart from Coxsackie b 2 virus and helps repair damage in previously infected people. Other studies have shown that astragalus enhances the body's own natural killer cell activity. As an antitumor agent, astragalus prevented cancer metastasis in 80 percent of mice tested. Still other studies have shown that astragalus stimulates T-cell activity and restores immune function in cancer patients with impaired immune function. The action of astragalus is comprehensive. Robyn Landis and K. P. Khalsa note that "astragalus stimulates phagocytosis (invader-engulfing activity), increasing the total number of cells and the aggressiveness of their activity. Increased macrophage activity has been measured as lasting up to seventy-two hours. It increases the number of stem cells (the 'generic' cells that can become any type needed) in the marrow and lymph tissue, stimulates their maturation into active immune cells, increases spleen activity, increases releases of antibodies, and boosts the production of hormonal messenger molecules that signal for virus destruction." And as Rob McCaleb noted in *HerbalGram* 21 (summer 1988) researchers at the University of Texas Medical Center