Medicinal mushrooms powerful allies in combating stress

In this world in which we are inundated daily by stress and pathogens, it can be useful to think of our body as a castle. The walls of the castle - our skin, bone and connective tissue - keep things out. Our mucosal membranes, genital urinary tract and eyes function like a moat. Inside our body is an army of cells, millions of loyal soldiers maintaining the fortress and multitasking as a self-defense system made up of archers, sentries, intelligence agents, communicators and armed guards.

With daily attacks from bacteria, viruses and parasites, imagine how taxing it is for the protectors of our human castle to keep our immune system strong and active. An underactive immune system makes us more prone to colds, flu, disease and infection. On the other hand, if our immune system is overactive, we are subject to allergies and it can potentially trigger an autoimmune response. As in our castle analogy, an optimal immune system is a balanced one.

In order to keep our defenses strong, it has become more important than ever to support our immune system. We can start by reducing our toxic load, maintaining a well-balanced diet and by incorporating positive lifestyle solutions to reduce and mitigate stress.

The skin – our largest organ - is exposed daily to chemicals through skincare, cosmetics and household products, this is why it’s important to always read the labels and opt for products that are paraben-free. Choosing organic foods free from pesticides is another important action, particularly in light of research suggesting that over the long term these chemicals have adverse effects on the immune system. Ensuring a well-balanced antioxidant-rich diet by incorporating fruits and vegetables provides vitamins and minerals, as well as fiber. Fiber promotes the removal of toxins and supports healthy digestive function.

A second sphere of action relates to positive lifestyle strategies that reduce the impacts of chronic stress; including activities such as physical exercise, walking in nature, meditation and connecting with others. Another important area is rest and restorative sleep, ideally aiming for seven to nine hours per night.

We can also strengthen our castle defenses through natural supplementation, including the use of medicinal mushrooms such as agaricus, cordyceps, coriolus, reishi, maitake, shiitake and others. These mushrooms work as immunomodulators, which are substances that bring balance or calm and activate the immune system, as needed. Medicinal mushrooms also share the remarkable qualities of adaptogens, which protect our bodies from all forms of stress (physical, biological, emotional and environmental). They literally help our cells adapt to stressors; unique in their capacity to support both the mind and the body in combating the effects of chronic stress.

The bottom line is that a well-balanced immune system – supported by a three-part action plan of good nutrition and hydration, natural supplements and positive lifestyles – acts as a strong fortress in protecting us from the effects of chronic stress and intrusions from toxic invaders.
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1 Study on the impact of lead acetate pollutant on immunotoxicity produced by thiamethoxam pesticide


1 Effects of the medicinal mushroom Agaricus blazei Murill on immunity, infection and cancer. Review article


1 Coriolus versicolor mushroom polysaccharides exert immunoregulatory effects on mouse B cells via membrane Ig and TLR-4 to activate the MAPK and NF-κB signaling pathways.


1 Immune-enhancing effects of Maitake (Grifola frondosa) and Shiitake (Lentinula edodes) extracts, Ann Transl Med. 2014 Feb; 2(2): 14. doi: 10.3978/j.issn.2305-5839.2014.01.05http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4202470/