



Magic Miracle Mushroom

Are mushrooms visitors from out of space? Some experts believe that mushrooms really are one of our true visitors from a land beyond our own, their spores having travelled here aboard meteorites millions of years ago. They also believe mushrooms have serious healing powers. Perhaps those mushrooms with psychotropic properties really do have something to say to us...

Mushrooms or rather Fungi are intriguing organisms, with certain species being the largest known on this planet (covering hundreds of kilometres) and with more species of fungi (1-2 million) than any other.

Certain species of mushrooms are also known to have great healing qualities and the Lingshi (Chinese) or Reishi (Japanese) mushroom, which is known botanically as *Ganoderma lucidum* is perhaps the greatest of these. Widely used in Traditional Chinese Medicine for over 4000 years, it is probably the oldest species of mushroom to have been used medicinally. Lingzhi in Chinese has been translated to mean "herb of spiritual potency." In Shen Nong's Herbal Classic, dating back 2000 years and considered to be the oldest book on oriental herbal medicine, the Lingzhi mushroom is ranked number one superior medicine of all 365 listed healing herbs.

Naturally *Ganoderma* grows at the base of deciduous trees like the maple. It is however quite rare in the wild and is now cultivated commercially both indoor under sterile conditions and outside in controlled environments. It is the polysaccharides and triterpenes contained within *Ganoderma*'s fruiting body and mycelia that have shown to have efficacy in improving immune system functioning. *Ganoderma lucidum* is the only known source of a group of triterpenes, called ganoderic acids, which have a remarkably similar molecular structure to steroid hormones, almost like natural steroids. Also contained within the mushroom are ergosterol, coumarin, mannitol, lactones, alkaloids, unsaturated fatty acids and vitamins B1, B2 and B6 and a variety of minerals.

Numerous studies in medical institutions around the world have been conducted into the healing abilities of *Ganoderma* and it has shown a remarkable effectiveness in treating an amazing array of diseases and conditions. Western medicines desire to isolate compounds from nature so that they can be synthetically reproduced but pharmaceutical corporations have been frustrated by

inconsistent results in the studies of the isolated ingredients within *Ganoderma* that were thought to be the active constituents. This leads many experts to speculate that it is the combination of these active ingredients that may be the answer to its magical healing qualities. Research has shown *Ganoderma*'s effectiveness in strengthening the

respiratory system, with healing of the lungs and benefits to those with asthma and bronchial complaints. It is generally considered to be an excellent restorative, improving immune system functioning. The mushrooms have been shown to be anti-inflammatory, antiviral, anti-parasitic, anti-fungal and anti-allergenic - altogether a healing superfood of the highest order.

Recent studies in Australia have included a clinical trial at the University of Western Sydney into the healthy maintenance of blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol levels for optimum heart function with the aid of *Ganoderma* supplementation. Also studies at the University of Sydney in its Herbal Medicines and Research Unit confirmed the presence of high levels of anti-oxidants.

The mushrooms have been shown to be anti-inflammatory, antiviral, anti-parasitic, anti-fungal and anti-allergenic - altogether a healing superfood of the highest order.

In the preparation of *Ganoderma* extracts, an interesting phenomenon has emerged. The oil within the spores contains a greater presence of the active compounds that are thought to be responsible for its amazing healing properties, than the body of the fruit itself, and that there is a husk or spore wall around the oil within. When this husk is removed, it allows greater absorption by the body of the active constituents, recent breakthroughs in the extraction have now made this possible. High quality extracts of *Ganoderma* are now available in supplement form and are beginning to be included as ingredients in teas and other beverage formats. SH ■