How Echinacea Boosts the Immune System

Echinacea is a coneflower that is found most commonly in eastern and central North America. It is typically found in early-to-late summer in the open wooded areas and prairies. Echinacea was used by the North American Indians and the early settlers as an anti-microbial for relief of infections, pain, and to reduce symptoms of snake bite and anthrax. Others have used Echinacea for relief of scarlet fever, syphilis, malaria, blood poisoning, and diphtheria.

The advent of antibiotics, and the massive marketing and prestige that went behind this new medical technology, reduced the usage and understanding of herbal medicine. The Germans picked up Echinacea in the 20th century and began to study it, performing numerous studies that have demonstrated Echinacea's effectiveness at enhancing immunity. For more on the history of Echinacea, check out Wikipedia.

Echinacea Reduces Inflammation

Echinacea has been used to reduce inflammation associated with skin conditions like eczema and psoriasis. It has also been shown effective against bronchitis, candida, herpes, and other major infections. Many individuals today use it as an immune aid to prevent or overcome colds and flu.

Echinacea stimulates the body's immune response to resist bacterial and viral invaders. One of the mechanisms is by increasing the levels of the chemical properdin that increases cellular resistance to infection. This unique herb also activates T cells and stimulates macrophages that engulf and destroy problematic invaders. This activity also helps reduce the formation of tumors.

Echinacea Blocks Pathogenic Invasion

Humans and animals utilize hyaluronic acid to form healthy stable cells. Most pathogenic organisms utilize the hyaluronidase enzyme to destroy hyaluronic acid and allow easy access into the cells and tissues of the body. Echinacea has a constituent by the name of echinacin B which has been shown to inhibit the enzyme hyluronidase, thus blocking the pathogens ability to enter the cell and cause damage.

Echinacea has three unique nutrients that synergize to enhance immune activity. These nutrients include polysaccharides, alkylamides and cichoric acid which together provide a strong activating force on white blood cells that destroy pathogenic organisms and tumor growth.

The Most Common Uses of Echinacea

Most herbalists recommend Echinacea to treat ear infections, athlete’s food, hay fever, sinusitis, urinary tract infections, vaginal yeast infections, and slow healing wounds. It is also very good at speeding up recovery time from common colds and flu. Many individuals use it in a proactive manner to keep their immune system bolstered in an effort to prevent illness.

Some of the best ways to consume Echinacea are in an organic herbal tea format, as a dried or fresh flower, or in a fermented organic acid base. The fermentation of Echinacea in an organic acid base unlocks the full nutritional potential of the plant. The organic acids also help to feed the gut flora and form an alkaline ash that restores a healthy pH balance to the body.

From the Editor

Not all echinacea is created equal. Most on the market are diluted, weak, and ineffective. If you're looking for a very high quality echinacea tincture check out Echinacea Plus at Green lifestyle Market.

Proper Immune Coordination

We have two major parts to our immune response. These two major parts of the immune system are the TH-1 pathway, which produces an immediate response, and the TH-2 pathway, which produces a delayed response. The TH-1 response is marked by T cells while the TH-2 pathway is built on antibody formation and identification.

The key to a strong immune system is balance and coordination. The TH -1 system is classified by Killer T cells, T helper cells, and T suppressor cells. When we have too many T suppressor cells our immune system is too weak and we get colds/fevers/flu. When the Killers are too many or the helpers and suppressors are too few, we end up with a poorly coordinated immune response that damages our own tissue. This is commonly seen in autoimmune disorders.

When the TH-2 system is dominant the body tends to rely on it when it is threatened in any way. A common example is allergies. When we are exposed to the allergen, the TH-2 system goes into overdrive causing a massive inflammatory response. This is due to poor balance between the TH-1/TH-2 system and then a poorly coordinated TH-2 response that creates a systemic inflammatory reaction in response to a very minor threat.

Echinacea is a TH-1 Pathway Enhancing Herb

TH-1 pathway enhancing herbs include Astragalus, Echinacea, Licorice root, Lemon balm, & pomegranate among others. The TH-2 boosting herbs include pine bark, green tea, grape seed, and resveratrol. Immune modulating herbs, such as turmeric, boswellia, and ginger, help to enhance immune coordination through the entire body.

To put this information into action, you can access how you feel and what you notice after an immune pathway challenge. To do this, try taking a large dose of a TH-1 boosting herb. If you feel wonderful and your immunity improves, there is likelihood that you may have a pre-existing TH-2 dominance. If you feel terrible and are massively inflamed, there is a likelihood you are TH-1 dominant and that you over-stimulated this pathway. Try balancing with TH-2 boosting herbs and immune modulators.

Keep a journal and see what imbalances you may have. This will give you an advanced level of knowledge of your own individual tendencies and will allow you to stay healthy and balanced throughout your life.

Recommended Supplements:

- Shillington’s Echinacea+
- Shillington’s Blood Detox
- Coptis chinensis
- Shillington’s Total Tonic

Further Reading:

- *Make Your Own Total Nutrition Formula*
- *How to Make Homemade Vitamin C*
- Garlic
- Ginger

- Apple Cider Vinegar
- Make Your Immune System Bulletproof

Sources:

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