The Unique Mushroom that Balances Hormones

Nature provides an amazing array of resources to improve our health and boost our immunity. Mushrooms are a type of fungus that are enjoyed by people all over the world and renowned for their nutritional benefits. In recent years, scientists have studied the medicinal benefits of the cordyceps sinensis mushroom.

Mushrooms have been used as food, medicine, poison, and in spiritual mushroom practices in religious rituals across the world since at least 5000 BC. They have been used in tonics, soups, teas, prepared foods and herbal formulas to promote health and longevity. The mushroom fungus, *Penicillium,* was the raw material used to create the antibiotic penicillin, which transformed the medical world.

What is Cordyceps?

This oddly shaped mushroom grows native to China and grows around the Tibetan area. For years, it was thought to be a living worm rather than a mushroom and was nicknamed the caterpillar fungus as it is seen growing on the sides of trees. Cordyceps is actually a fungal spore that kills insects such as caterpillars and moths and feeds off their tissues.

The Cordyceps mushroom has been described in old Chinese medical books from ancient times and is also found in Tibetan medicine. Traditional Tibetan healers have recommended Cordyceps as a tonic for all illnesses. This is because they continually witness how it improves people’s energy, sleep habits, digestion, stamina, libido, and endurance.

Cordyceps first became popular in the western world when the

coach of the record breaking Chinese female runners credited it with the team's extraordinary success. Today, many researchers believe Cordyceps to be one of the most powerful performance and longevity promoting herbs (1).

Cordyceps Improves Adrenal and Hormonal Health

The adrenal glands are critical for maintaining healthy energy levels, physical and mental performance, and good sleeping patterns. Adrenal fatigue is a state where the adrenal glands are overworked and unable to perform their functions effectively. Individuals with adrenal fatigue suffer from low energy, poor hormonal function, and chronic inflammation.

Adaptogenic substance is a term originally defined by Russian scientist Dr Nikolai Lazarev in the late 1940's following research done on the eleuthero root. Israel Brekham, PhD and Dr. I.V. Dardymov formally defined adaptogens with three major characteristics:

1. Adaptogens are non-toxic – this means they don't have harmful effects on the body and are safe to be taken for long periods of time.
2. They produce a non-specific biological response that improves the body's ability to resist physical, chemical, emotional, and other biological stressors.
3. They have a strong influence on the body towards homeostatic balance. This means that they move the body in the direction of a normal homeostatic set point. If stress hormones are too high, they lower and stabilize them, and if stress hormones are too low, they raise and stabilize them.

Cordyceps Improves Performance

Cordyceps is shown to help the body produce and balance cortisol and other stress hormones (2). The adaptogenic qualities allow them to influence the body towards homeostatic balance. This means that they move the body in the direction of a normal homeostatic set point. If stress hormones are too high, they lower and stabilize them and if stress hormones are too low, they raise and stabilize them (3).

In a 2003 study, Cordyceps extract was shown to improve a group of rat's physical performance in an endurance swim by over 16% . The rats also showed signs of reduced stress during the swim compared to the placebo group (4).

A 2014 study showed that Cordyceps markedly reduced exercise induced oxidative stress in a group of rats. The study showed that the rats using Cordyceps has significantly increased production of intracellular anti-oxidants superoxide dismutase, glutathione and catalase in their serum, liver, and muscle. They had considerably lower oxidative stress markers in their serum, liver, and muscle (5).

For more indepth information on Cordyceps, including the best forms to take it in and the best teas, raw products, and supplements to get online, see my complete article here:

Sources:

1. *Traditional uses and medicinal potential of Cordyceps sinensis of Sikkim* – National Institute of Health
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3. Pharmacological actions of Cordyceps, a prized folk medicine. – National Institute of Health
4. *Antifatigue and antistress effect of the hot-water fraction from mycelia of Cordyceps* sinensis – National

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5. Polysaccharides from Cordyceps sinensis mycelium ameliorate exhaustive swimming exercise-induced oxidative stress – National Institute of Health