Cordyceps

En Español (Spanish Version)

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Cordyceps sinensis

Principal Proposed Uses
• None

Other Proposed Uses
• Cancer Prevention; Diabetes; Fatigue; High Blood Pressure; High Cholesterol; Immune Support; Kidney Protection; Liver Support; Lupus; Male Sexual Dysfunction; Sports Performance; Viral Hepatitis; And Many Others

Although *Cordyceps sinensis* is often described as an herb, it’s actually a combination of a parasitic fungus and the larvae of a moth (a caterpillar). The fungus attacks the caterpillar and destroys it from within. The remaining structures of the caterpillar along with the fungus are dried and sold as cordyceps.

Cordyceps has a long history of use in China as a “tonic,” a substance said to generally strengthen the body, particularly following illness. It was also used to treat bronchitis, kidney failure, and tuberculosis. ¹

What Is Cordyceps Used for Today?

Cordyceps is widely marketed today as treatment for many conditions. However, there is no reliable scientific evidence that it actually provides any medical benefits.

Most research on cordyceps was done in China and is not up to modern scientific standards. In general, **double-blind**, placebo-controlled studies are the most reliable form of evidence. (For information on the reasons why, see Why Does This Database Rely on Double-blind Studies?) However, such studies have to be performed and reported according to certain standards. Although several double-blind studies have been reported on cordyceps, they all fall considerably short of the level necessary for scientific validity. These somewhat dubious double-blind trials hint that cordyceps might be helpful for reducing **high cholesterol**² and improving **male sexual function**³,⁴.

Evidence is more negative than positive regarding whether cordyceps is helpful for **enhancing sports performance**⁵-⁷. Weak evidence hints that cordyceps may modulate the immune system, which means that it stimulates some aspects of the immune system while suppressing others.⁸-¹³

On this basis, it has been tried in China as an aid in organ transplant surgery ¹⁴ and for the treatment of **viral hepatitis**¹⁵,¹⁶ and **lupus**.¹⁷,¹⁸

Highly preliminary **test-tube** and **animal studies** hint that cordyceps may help fight **stress**,¹⁹ control blood sugar levels (potentially making it useful in **diabetes**),²⁰-²² **reduce cancer risk**,²³ **lower high blood pressure**,²⁴ and help protect the kidney against damage caused by the drugs **cyclosporin** and **gentamycin**.²⁵-²⁷
Other test-tube studies hint that cordyceps may stimulate production of hormones, such as cortisol and testosterone. However, contrary to what some websites say, these studies are far too preliminary to indicate any therapeutic hormonal effect.

**Dosage**

Typical traditional recommended doses of cordyceps range from 5-10 grams per day. Concentrated extracts are also available, taken at a lower dosage.

**Safety Issues**

Use of cordyceps does not generally cause apparent side effects. However, comprehensive safety studies have not been reported. In addition, there are two case reports in which cordyceps products contained enough lead to cause lead poisoning. Safety in young children, pregnant or nursing women, or people with severe liver or kidney disease has not been established.

**References [+]**


