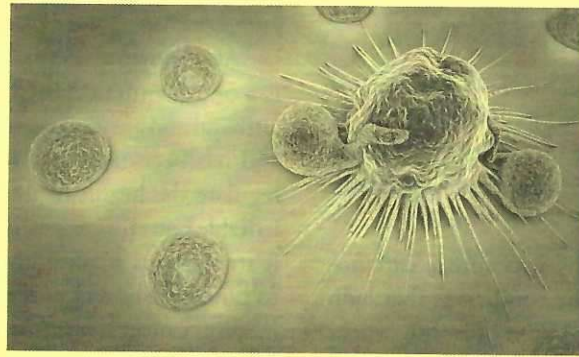


Herbal Remedies for Cancer



Cancer is the second leading cause of death in civilized nations and the number one cause of death between the ages of 45 and 75. According to the National Cancer Institute (NCI) nearly 40% of those living in the United States will be diagnosed with cancer at some point. Cancer rates are also increasing world-wide.

A diagnosis of cancer is a huge cause for feelings of fear, anxiety, worry and hopelessness, which can make it difficult for people to make decisions about cancer treatment. Whether out of fear or the lack of information on alternative treatments, most people end up taking the modern medical route. However, there are natural options you should consider.

This includes many herbs that have been used historically to aid recovery from cancer, which is the topic of this month's *Sunshine Sharing*. So, if you have cancer or are supporting a loved one who has this disease, we encourage you to do some research on these herbs and other natural approaches to this disease. We also encourage you and professional help to make decisions about the best approach for you.

While, some people will choose a completely natural approach, others may choose a hybrid approach, a combination of medical treatments and natural therapies. And some will choose the medical approach. But, whatever the choice, they need to have hope that there is potential for recovery, because without that hope recovery will be much more difficult. Your mental and emotional attitude is an important component in cancer recovery.

A Holistic Approach

It is important to take a holistic approach to cancer. Modern medicine is focused on tools for killing or removing cancer cells, specifically surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy. However, cancer cells form because the cellular environment becomes disturbed to the point that cells have to mutate in order to survive. If you kill the cancer cells, but do not alter the environment of the body, the cancer is likely to return.

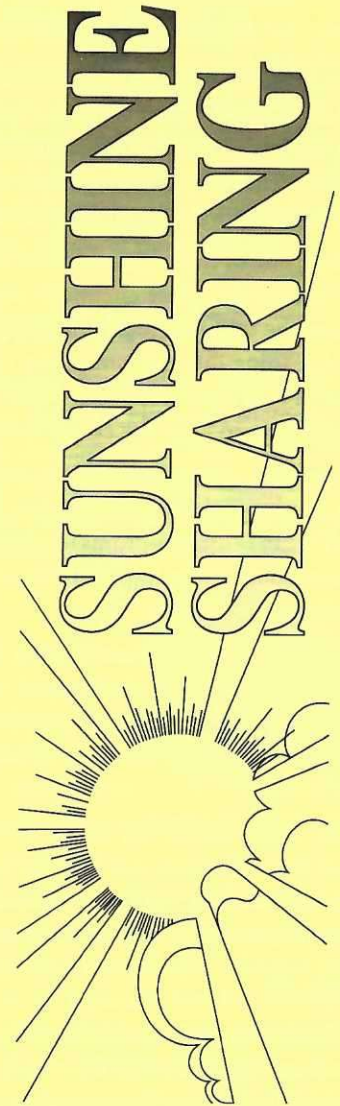
So, whether you try to destroy the cancer cells via medical treatments or cytotoxic herbs, it is vital to clean up the environment of the body. A diet consisting primarily of fresh, chemical-free fruits and vegetables is a good place to start. It's also good to minimize your exposure to toxins in general.

A healthy immune system can recognize and destroy cancer cells, so it's important to fortify your immune system with herbs and nutrients. There is also evidence that stress and unresolved trauma contribute to the development of cancer, so techniques that reduce stress will be helpful, along with doing some type of mental and emotional healing work or therapy.

Potential Herbal Remedies for Cancer

There are three main categories of herbal remedies that have been used for cancer recovery: alterative, immune stimulating, and cytotoxic herbs. First, alterative herbs help clean up and support the underlying environment of the body so it becomes a poor environment for cancer. Second, immune stimulating herbs boost immune activity to help the immune system fight cancer. And finally, cytotoxic herbs help to induce apoptosis or pre-programmed cell death. These are remedies that can help destroy cancer cells with less toxicity than medical treatments like radiation and chemotherapy.

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Your guide to better health the natural way.

Vol. 35 No. 5

Important Notice

The information in *Sunshine Sharing* is for educational purposes only and should not be used to diagnose and treat diseases. If you have a health problem, we recommend you consult a competent health practitioner before embarking on any course of treatment.

Sunshine Sharing is an independent educational publication and receives no financial support from any herb or health product manufacturer. Your comments, questions and personal experiences are welcome. Send them to comments@treelite.com.

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Alterative Herbs

An alterative is an herb traditionally used to clean up *swampy* or toxic conditions in the body. Also known as blood purifiers, these herbs aid liver detoxification, lymphatic drainage, and/or urinary function. There are two important reasons to include alteratives as part of a natural approach to cancer.

First, one of the major causes of cancer is exposure to carcinogenic chemicals. These chemicals create the conditions that help to cause the cellular mutations that turn healthy cells into cancer cells. Cleaning out this unhealthy cellular environment helps to remove a root cause of cancer, which will not only aid recovery, it will also help to keep the cancer from coming back.

Secondly, dying cells release endotoxins in the body which must be cleansed from the system. When large numbers of cells die off it can cause symptoms like lymphatic congestion, increased inflammation, brain fog, diarrhea or constipation, pain, fatigue, or nausea.

This can happen when treating infections with antibiotics or antifungals, but it can also happen when killing cancer cells with chemotherapy and radiation. In the case of chemotherapy, the chemotherapy drugs themselves must also be detoxified by the body, as well.

So, using alteratives, along with plenty of water and other aids to detoxification, can help the body flush out this debris and prevent reduce these effects associated with cancer treatment. Here are some alteratives traditionally used to support cancer recovery.

Burdock

Burdock root is a widely used ingredient in traditional herbal formulas for cancer. It is a gentle remedy that has been eaten as a food. It helps clear the lymphatics, acting as a mild diuretic and laxative.

It also helps feed healthy gut flora. While there is both historical and scientific evidence that suggests it may be helpful for cancer, the exact mechanism is unknown. The herbalist Michael Moore claimed it helps to deactivate cancer causing chemicals, but it also helps the immune system by improving gut and lymphatic health. Given its non-toxic nature, it is safe to use either by itself or as part of a formula to help support cancer recovery.



Red Clover

Red clover has also been widely used as a gentle alterative remedy for cancer. It also improves lymphatic drainage, softens cysts, and has been used to clear out lumps in the breast and mastitis. It contains phytoestrogens that appear to block estrogen receptor sites against more powerful and potentially cancer-causing xenoestrogens. It has been used traditionally for cancers in the lymph nodes, breasts, and ovaries, and is often combined with burdock in anticancer herbal formulas.



Cat's Claw

Also known as *uña d'gato*, cat's claw is a South American herb that has antiviral and antimutagenic properties and has been used as a tonic to help regulate the health of the intestinal system in inflammatory and irritable bowel disorders. Because of its positive action on gut health, it strengthens natural immunity. It has also been used as an aid to cancer treatment and as a remedy for combating side effects of medical cancer treatments, particularly those that adversely affect gastrointestinal function.



Pau D'Arco

Also from South America, pau d'arco contains naphthoquinones that have antifungal, antiviral, and antitumor properties. These naphthoquinones have been found to have some cytotoxic properties and to act as immune stimulants. Since they dissolve better in alcohol than in water, tinctures may be more effective than decoctions or teas. Pau d'arco has primarily been used against carcinomas and leukemia.



Alterative Formulas

The alteratives mentioned above are often combined with other alteratives and immune-enhancing herbs to create formulas to help the body recover from cancer.

One example is an *Essiac Immune Tea Formula* believed to have originated with the Ojibway Indians. It was promoted by a nurse named Rene Caisse (Essiac is Caisse spelt backwards) and contains burdock, sheep sorrel, slippery elm, and turkey rhubarb. It acts primarily as an alterative, but may also have some mild cytotoxic effects.

Immune Stimulating Herbs

You might not realize that the body forms cancer cells quite regularly. Cells can become defective through damage and the immune system recognizes these abnormal cells and destroys them. Cancer occurs when the immune system fails to recognize and destroy these defective cells. This is partially a problem with cellular messaging, as cancer cells can become hidden from the immune system.

Thus, restoring immune function is a very important part of natural therapy for cancer. It is also an important healing strategy to employ following a round of radiation or chemotherapy, as these medical treatments often lower immune responses. Here are some major immune stimulants that have been used in recovering from cancer.

Astragalus

Astragalus is one of the 50 fundamental herbs used in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and has been used in China for over 2000 years. It is a general immune tonic and can be taken to boost the immune responses when treating



cancer. It can also be used to boost the immune system to prevent cancer and infections. It also has been used to help the body rebuild immune responses after chemotherapy and radiation.

Astragalus is generally a mild, well-tolerated remedy. Take 2-4 capsules up to three times a day. Astragalus can also be cooked with rice or used in soups.

Medicinal Mushrooms

Many species of mushrooms contain beta-glucans, which stimulate natural killer (NK) cell activity. They can stimulate production of tumor necrosis factor alpha (TNF- α) and other substances used by NK cells to initiate programmed cell death and destroy cancerous and viral-infected cells. Mushrooms may also contain essential sugars that form recognition sites on white blood cells and antibodies helping them recognize pathogens and cancer cells. Here are a few good mushrooms to consider.

Maitake mushrooms strengthen immunity, and enhance macrophage, NK cell, and T cell activity. This helps the immune system fight cancer and also strengthens the body to resist conventional cancer therapies. Studies have shown maitake may be helpful for leukemia, breast, colorectal, prostate, and liver cancer.



Turkey tail mushrooms have been shown to contain various compounds that boost immune activity. Studies suggest turkey tail may inhibit the growth of various types of cancer cells, initiate apoptosis, and stimulate immune responses such as natural killer cells. An extract from turkey tail, known as PSK or krestin, is an approved anticancer drug in Asia.

Chaga mushrooms appear to stimulate macrophage and natural killer cells and has some immune modulating properties. It also contains antioxidant compounds. An extract from chaga was approved as an anticancer drug (betungin) in Russia in 1955.



Cordyceps is considered a jing tonic in TCM, which means it enhances the basic life energy related to stamina and endurance. It reduces stress and is believed to prolong life. Cordyceps is not directly anticancerous, but can be used as a fortifying tonic to help people who are undergoing conventional cancer treatments.

Reishi (ganoderma) is considered a shen tonic in TCM which means it helps calm the nervous system reducing anxiety, insomnia, and moodiness. Stress reduces immune function and there is evidence that stress contributes to the development of cancer. Like cordyceps, reishi acts as a general tonic to the body and can also be used to fortify the body and help counteract some of the negative effects of conventional cancer therapy.

Immune Stimulating Formulas

Formulas containing the remedies mentioned above and other immune enhancing and tonic herbs can be helpful as part of a medical or natural approach to cancer therapy. Many people have found an **Immune-Boosting Formula** containing beta-glucans,

arabinogalactan, colostrum, cordyceps, reishi, and maitake helpful. Another option is a **Mushroom Immune Formula** that contains cordyceps, reishi mushroom, turkey tail, chaga, and shiitake.

Another valuable formula is a **Chinese Blood and Qi Tonic** containing astragalus, reishi, ginseng, lycium, and many other herbs that help to fortify a run-down system. This formula is specifically valuable to take after a round of chemotherapy or radiation to help the body recover from the side effects of these therapies.

Cytotoxic Herbs

So far we've covered remedies that support underlying body processes necessary for cancer recovery. However, there are herbs that can act as alternatives to chemotherapy. These herbs actually work to destroy cancer cells and may have some toxicity. This means that they require careful consideration when using, so please consult with a professional before using cytotoxic herbs.

Paw Paw

Dr. Jerry McLaughlin, a pharmacognosist working at Purdue University, found the cytotoxic properties of paw paw while screening over 10,000 plants for anticancer activity. He found that compounds from paw paw, known as acetogenins could inhibit cancer in multiple ways.



1. Acetogenins slow and stop the production of energy in cells by blocking the production of ATP. Cancer cells use 13-17 times more energy than normal cells. Normal cells can handle a reduction in ATP production, but the rapid metabolism of cancer cells causes them to commit apoptosis when their metabolism is slowed down. Apoptosis, or pre-programmed cell death, is the process by which cells die when their usefulness to the body has ended.
2. The reduction in ATP production inhibits angiogenesis, the process that allows new blood vessels to form, which allows tumors to grow.
3. ATP reduction also inhibits the DNA and RNA building blocks needed for cells to divide and reproduce. This slows down the rapid growth of cancer cells.
4. Finally, when tumors become resistant to chemotherapy, it is because they develop mechanisms to pump the chemotherapy drugs out of the cells. These mechanisms also require ATP, so acetogenins also make chemotherapy more effective and can restore the effectiveness of conventional chemotherapy in resistant tumors.

Dr. McLaughlin's research showed that various acetogenins were up to 300 times more potent than the anticancer drug Taxol and were less toxic to normal cells. His research also shows that while acetogenins could be toxic in large quantities, they are a very safe remedy. In research involving dogs that were fed these compounds, it was found that the dogs threw up before reaching a toxic dose.

The best way to use paw paw is to use a **Standardized Acetogenin Formula**. Start with one capsule four times daily. If it

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is tolerated, the dose can be gradually increased to two or three capsules four times a day. However, more is not necessarily better, as higher amounts may cause nausea, vomiting, dizziness, fatigue, or light-headedness. If these symptoms occur, you should reduce the dose. For anyone who is easily nauseated, it may be good to start with 1 capsule per day and gradually work up to a full dose over a period of a couple of weeks.

Paw paw is not for cancer prevention and does not work on all forms of cancer. It appears to work best on tumors.

Chaparral

Native to the southwestern United States, chaparral was one of the first plants to grow back after nuclear testing in Nevada. It contains nordihydroguaiaretic acid, a powerful antioxidant compound that also has anticancer activity. The plant has been blamed for causing liver problems, but this may be due to its use in capsules. It was never taken that way traditionally.



The traditional way Native Americans used it was as a tea, which appears to be a safer way to use it. The tea is made using 1/2 ounce of dried herb infused in a pint of boiling water for thirty minutes. While the tea tastes awful, it also makes it difficult to take too much. Avoid using chaparral if you have pre-existing kidney or liver disease and discontinue using it if you experience nausea, jaundice, or other signs of liver problems.

Poke Root

Poke root is a toxic botanical that contains five distinct proteins shown to have mitogenic (cancer-killing) action. It's also a powerful alternative that stimulates lymphatic draining, clearing swollen lymph nodes. Poke stimulates B and T lymphocytes and also stimulates the production of interleukin 1 and tumor necrosis factor.

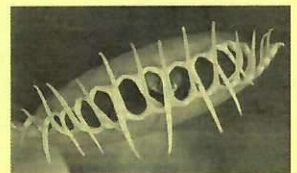


The safest way to use poke is as a topical oil. It can be applied on the skin to shrink swollen lymph nodes. It can also be applied topically to treat mastitis, breast cancer, and abscesses. It works like a castor oil pack but is stronger in action.

Poke can also be used internally as a small part of an anticancer formula. It is best suited for cancers involving lymphatic tissue or for aiding lymphatic drainage during cancer die-off.

Venus Fly Trap

This insect-eating, carnivorous plant has been used for conditions such as tumors in advanced stages (mammary, bladder, prostate carcinomas and osteosarcoma) and solid tumors. It has also been used for Hodgkin's and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. The proper preparation is a tincture made by preserving the fresh plant juice in alcohol.



Pacific Yew

Scientific researchers funded by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) discovered a compound in Pacific yew (*Taxus brevifolia*) called paclitaxel, which is marketed as the anti-cancer drug Taxol. Taxol blocks cancer cell growth by stopping cell division, which triggers apoptosis in cancer cells. So, the Pacific yew twigs can also be used as an anti-cancer medicine. It was used by Native Americans for this and other purposes both topically and internally. However, be sure to get the Pacific yew as other species are toxic.

Additional Help and Information

For more information about how herbs can be used to help overcome cancer, contact the person who gave you this newsletter. We also recommend using the following resources to do your own research:

- Herbal Medicine, Healing, and Cancer* by Donald Yance
- Treating Cancer with Herbs* by Michael Tierra
- How to Prevent and Treat Cancer with Natural Medicine* by Michael Murray
- Holistic Cancer Care* by Chanchal Cabrera
- Strategies for Health* by Steven Horne