



# ASTRAGALUS ROOT

**Benefits and uses:** Promote resistance to infection, and hopefully reduce the number of colds and flu with **Astragalus Root**. Oriental herbalists have used it for centuries to maintain healthy blood sugar levels, treat coronary heart problems and lower blood pressure. Many people also use it as an overall good-health tonic to support healthy digestion and to help increase energy levels and stamina.

**Information:** Herbals/Nutritionals/Medicinals can be very strong. Consequently, if they are not tailored to your specific needs, they can do more harm than good. This information is meant to be used by your VHC Medical Team and personal Physician as they build your Total Health Plan. Never attempt to adjust your prescribed medications and/or Natural Treatments without your physician's and Medical Team's knowledge and guidance. Since herbals/nutritionals and medications can interact with each other, it is always advisable to consult with your health care provider and The Vibrant Health Community at [www.VibrantHealthCommunity.com](http://www.VibrantHealthCommunity.com) (or call 1-866-378-8253) before starting or changing your program.

**Botanical:** *Astragalus membranaceus*

**Family:** *Leguminosae* (legume) - *Fabaceae* (pea)

**Other common names:** Locoweed, Milk Vetch Root, Huang Qi, Chinese Astragalus

**History:** Astragalus is native to northern China and the elevated regions of the Chinese provinces, Yunnan and Sichuan. It is a bushy plant with hairy stems that grow to sixteen inches and includes many species that are used interchangeably. While over two thousand species of Astragalus exist worldwide, it is the Chinese *Astragalus membranaceus* that has been extensively tested, both chemically and pharmacologically. First recorded for its importance as a tonic herb over two thousand years ago in China, in the classical treatise *Shen Nong Pen Tsao Ching*, Oriental herbalists have used it for centuries, usually in combination with other herbs, for wide variety of ailments. Many Western researchers are just beginning to discover its benefits and striking results. Recent studies suggest that Astragalus appears to help activate the immune system, enhancing the body's natural ability to fight major diseases. Several preliminary clinical trials in China have suggested that Astragalus Root can benefit immune function and improve survival in some people with cancer, but the quality of the trials left much doubt, and it is difficult to know how useful Astragalus really was. The portion of the plant used medicinally is the four- to seven-year-old dried root, collected in the spring. This ancient cure-all contains betaine, beta-

sitosterol, calcium, choline, copper, iron, magnesium, manganese, potassium, zinc, flavonoids, triterpene glycosides (e.g., astragalosides I–VII), amino acids, essential fatty acids and polysaccharides (the main nutrients that feed our bodies).

**Beneficial Uses:** Astragalus Root is an energy tonic is a mild stimulant that combats fatigue and prolonged stress. It is used to increase metabolism, stamina, strength and vitality.

Astragalus is considered an "adaptogen," an herb that tends to normalize body functions and reinstate metabolic balance after physically and emotionally stressful situations have altered those functions. It helps the body to adapt and return to a sense of well-being.

Traditional herbalists have long used Astragalus as a diabetes treatment, and modern research has indicated that in studies including people with diabetes who also had various complications associated with the disorder, including diabetic retinopathy, the results showed improvements in blood flow through the eye in 82 percent of the participants, and fasting blood sugar was

kept below 150 milligrams per deciliter for 77 percent of the participants, without the use of other medications.

Modern Chinese clinical studies have found that the herb contains an anti-clotting agent and has vasodilating properties, helping to prevent coronary heart disease and improving circulation. Chinese researchers have had good preliminary results using Astragalus compounds called astragalosides in treating congestive heart failure.

Astragalus Root is said to help strengthen and restore normal immune function in seriously debilitated patients. Many modern researchers claim that the herb appears to increase the production of the body's T-cells (white blood cells), which attack the invaders that cause disease, and seems to protect healthy cells while defending against unhealthy cells. The herb also activates the important malignant growth suppressing gene p53 that prevents defective cells from multiplying. Gene p53 acts as a "molecular patrolman" that ensures that genetically defective cells do not multiply and may reduce the risk of serious colorectal, breast and other malignant diseases.

This tonic herb is reputed to protect the immune system and promote resistance to invasive infection. Astragalus Root is said to be useful in treating immune-deficiency related problems, including the debilitating effects of AIDS, by stimulating the activity of T-helper cells that are depleted by AIDS. It is said to increase production of the immune-system chemical interleukin-2, which fights human papilloma virus.

Astragalus is considered an anti-inflammatory. It is said to be effective in relieving the discomforts associated with lung weakness and may promote general healing. It is also thought to accelerate healing in the bronchial tubes and promote better breathing, which can be helpful in cases of emphysema.

As a diuretic, urine flow is improved by Astragalus Root, which may also reduce the potential of infection in the

bladder. The herb has been used as a treatment for bladder infections caused by *Proteus*, which can cause kidney stones. It is also said to be an anti-hypertensive, which promotes healthy blood pressure by helping to rid the body of excess water weight.

In treating the common cold, when used during cold and flu season, Astragalus Root is thought to protect against the number of colds caught or possibly shorten their duration. The herb seems to increase the body's level of antibodies and interferon (the protein compound that slows the course of viral infection) in the body. Early clinical trials in China suggest Astragalus Root might also benefit people with chronic viral hepatitis, though it may take one to two months to see results.

Astragalus increases the flow of bile and digestive fluids and supports good digestion and also helps to support adrenal gland, liver and spleen function. It is an antibacterial that helps to eliminate toxins, thus promoting the healing of damaged tissue. In supporting the liver it is also thought to protect it against the chemical damage caused by chemotherapy.

One preliminary trial in Chinese trial found that Astragalus Root could decrease overactive immune function in people with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), an autoimmune disease, but further trials are needed, however, to know if Astragalus is effective or safe for people with SLE, or any other autoimmune disease. It is thought, however, to stimulate beneficial components of the immune system in patients with lupus (the natural killer [NK] cells) without stimulating the detrimental components involved in rheumatoid arthritis (the B cells).

With regard to *Myasthenia gravis*, although Astragalus is often an immune stimulant, it is also said to act as an immune suppressant in the treatment of *Myasthenia gravis*. In one study, Astragalus significantly reduced patients' nicotinic acetylcholine receptor antibodies, a measure of the disease's severity.