

Reishi Extract and Arthritis

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by Dr. Markho Rafael

Reishi extract has been used in Traditional Chinese Medicine to treat arthritis and other forms of inflammation for over 2,000 years. Also commonly known by its Latin name as "*Ganoderma*," or Chinese "Ling Zhi," Reishi is by far the most searched medicinal mushroom on the Internet with over 200,000 searches per month. And although it may not be the panacea ("cure-all") that some hold it to be, the fact that modern research confirms it as an inflammation modulator may help explain why it has long been heralded as such in the Orient.

In fact, Chinese medical practitioners have been prescribing Reishi extract for ages in cases of arthritis, bronchitis and other conditions involving any type of inflammation. Modern research in Asia as well as in America and Europe confirm the validity of these uses. Out of 19 papers used for this article, 17 reported positive results in the use of Reishi extract for arthritis. Only two were studies were inconclusive, both of which were conducted by the same research team. (1,2)

Regarding anti-inflammatory properties in general, a study out of India (2003) demonstrated that Reishi decreased inflammation in cases of acute or chronic edema by 56% and 60% respectively. (3) An earlier American study (1993) had already shown that, water extracts of *G. pentaphyllum* and *G. lucidum* [Reishi] were found to possess significant anti-inflammatory activity. (4) In the references are seven additional papers listed which all conclude that Reishi (*Ganoderma lucidum*) possesses potent anti-inflammatory qualities. (5,6,7,8,9,10,11)

Other research has been conducted on Reishi extract that relate specifically to arthritis. In 2006, Kenneth Blum et al. published findings in support of both the effectiveness and safety of using Reishi extract for "joint health," providing "clinical evidence" to back up their claim. (12)

Also that same year, a Chinese study by Xi Bao et al. came to the conclusion that Reishi plus another medicinal herbal remedy commonly used in China seemed to have a "beneficial immunomodulatory effect" on arthritis. (13)

Just how Reishi accomplishes its beneficial influence on arthritis may have been stumbled upon by Ho et al. in 2007 (14) when they discovered that GL-PP [*Ganoderma lucidum* polysaccharide peptide] helped to significantly reduce one of the causative agents of rheumatoid arthritis known as RASF, short for "Rheumatoid Arthritis Synovial Fibroblasts."

Several additional papers have been published that summarize positive results in the use of Reishi against arthritis. (15,16,17) One even states that Reishi compares favorably to prednisone, albeit without side effects. (18) On the other hand, a separate study found that supplementing with Reishi helped balance the side effects of prednisolone* that were experienced by some patients, including protein in the urine and cell toxicity. (19) (Prednisolone is the active compound of prednisone, which gets broken down by the liver and converted to prednisolone.)

In conclusion, the body of research does seem to support the use of Reishi extract in cases of arthritis. Remember that it is important to always work with a licensed medical practitioner when using any herb for medicinal purposes.

Note on name confusion: The name "Reishi" is Japanese for the perennial tree mushroom that American naturalists refer to as "Varnished Conk." In China, it is known as "Ling Zhi." All these names usually refer to the species *Ganoderma lucidum*, which for the sake of distinction from other types of Reishi may sometimes be called "Common Reishi" or "Red Reishi."

Other related species that are often called "Reishi" include: "Hemlock Reishi" (*Ganoderma tsugae*), which is common on hemlock trees in eastern U.S.; the Chinese species known as "Black Reishi" (*Ganoderma sinense*); another American species found on the west coast which is sometimes referred to as "Red Reishi" (*Ganoderma resinaceum*), although "Red Reishi" more often refers to *G. lucidum* in contrast to "Black Reishi," *G. sinense*; and finally two Japanese species, one that is sometimes known as "Purple Reishi" *Ganoderma japonicum*, and one without any English name, *Ganoderma neo-japonicum*.

About the Author:

Dr. Markho Rafael works as a herbal researcher and writer since 1996, specializing in medicinal mushrooms.