

Natural health



Look after your body and wellbeing naturally with **Jan Purser's** essential monthly guide to alternative medicine, health and nutrition.



Depression suppression

Looking for a natural way to treat depression? Talk to your naturopath about St John's wort. A recent review of 29 trials found the herbal medicine to have similar effects as prescribed antidepressants but with far fewer side effects. Just a word of warning though – don't self-prescribe. St John's wort can interact unfavourably with some medications, so talk to your doctor or naturopath before taking it.

Source: Cochrane Reviews, 2008

Should I take ... reishi?

Why would I need it? For centuries, the reishi mushroom (*Ganoderma lucidum*) has been valued in traditional Chinese medicine. Reishi extract is used in the treatment of asthma, arthritis, bronchitis, liver disease, stomach ulcers, high blood pressure and some blood disorders. Studies published in recent years also show reishi extract may help in the treatment of monocytic leukaemia, breast cancer, and lower urinary tract conditions in men. Naturopaths may include reishi extract in their prescriptions for people with HIV/AIDS or other immune conditions, or those undergoing cancer treatments. People with heart disease, autoimmune disease, chronic fatigue syndrome and high blood cholesterol may also benefit from taking reishi extract.

How much? Doses vary from 500mg to 1500mg of extract three times a day.

Anything I should know? Reishi is often found in combination with other mushrooms, such as shiitake, or in immune-boosting complex supplements. Avoid reishi if you have an allergy to fungi. Check with your practitioner if you take blood-thinning medication.



Jan Purser Dip.Nutr., DRT, is a naturopathic nutrition consultant, remedial therapist and public speaker. If you have any questions on diet, natural health or nutrition, write to Natural Solutions, PO Box 3, South Fremantle WA 6162, or email ns@foodbodyandhealth.com.au We regret Jan is unable to personally answer letters.

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Not happy?

Ask Jan

Q Is it true that purple foods help prevent cancer?

T. Benson, via email

A Berries with a purple tone, such as blueberries, or the ones that stain your fingers purple, including mulberries, blackberries and cherries, contain powerful anti-oxidants called proanthocyanidins. Beetroot, another good finger stainer, contains betalains – anti-oxidant flavonoids. Strong anti-oxidants such as these have the capacity to encourage the death of cancer cells, and these foods have undergone extensive research for their protective qualities. People with cancer could include purple foods in their diet on a daily basis to help prevent further spread of the disease. A few other foods that are rich in protective anti-oxidants include plums, cranberries, raspberries, turmeric, red beans and red cabbage.



Eczema relief

Take the itch out of eczema and speed the healing of your skin with this quick cure. Place a handful of rolled oats and, if you have them, some lavender flowers into a small silk bag or a stocking and tie the end securely. Before taking a bath or shower, gently rub the affected skin with sweet almond oil. Then soften the oat sock in the shower or bath and gently rub it over your skin instead of soap. The oats help to soothe your skin and the lavender is healing. Replace the oats and lavender each time. Also, take 2000mg fish oil two to three times per day to reduce inflammation.

