



Cordyceps sinensis

Its beneficial effects on the human organism

Cordyceps sinensis is classified as a "higher fungus". It grows naturally in Tibetan highlands, about 4,000 meters above sea level. When during the warm season a Cordyceps spore falls onto the body of a particular butterfly larva (Hepialide), then it germinates during spring time. First the fungus grows using the larva as its source of nutrients, later, when from below the ground it reaches the surface, it connects to the roots of grass growing on the Tibetan plateaus and starts taking nutrients from them. Due to the extreme climatic conditions in Tibet and a reduced level of oxygen in those high elevations, Cordyceps possesses an amazing capacity for storing energy.

In the Eastern hemisphere Cordyceps has always been considered as the most valuable of all plants. In the past Cordyceps was especially valued by emperors and their families. In China they used to call Cordyceps "a gift from God" and "wonder talisman" because none of the other plants have more healing properties than Cordyceps.

Cordyceps serves as a potent antioxidant. It contains beta-carotene (provitamin A), vitamins E and C, many minerals, selenium, zinc, co-enzyme Q 10, immunomodulating polysaccharides, and many other important and precious substances.

Cordyceps contains 77 micro- and macronutrients, more than 80 types of enzymes, essential amino acids, and unsaturated fatty acids. Scientific research has shown that due to its unique polysaccharide complex Cordyceps has a very strong favorable biological effect on the immune system.

Cordyceps is the only plant on this planet which, besides the specific protection from cancer and its dampening effect on its progression, has also an anti-tumor effect (Yoshida and co-authors, J., 1989; Nakamura, K. and co-authors, 1999).

Cordyceps increases the body's resistance against various internal and external influences and shows strong anti-allergic properties.

It has been observed that use of Cordyceps products induces certain self-purifying mechanisms within the human body, with toxic substances naturally being eliminated from the physiology, such as intestinal poisons, drug residues, radionuclides, heavy metals, salts, and others.

Cordyceps is a natural antibiotic and inhibits the pneumococci, staphylococci, streptococci, and many other germs from multiplying. It also affects a variety of viruses, including adenovirus, influenza, hepatitis, herpes (cold sores), and atypical pneumonia.

Cordyceps products, as part of the combination therapy, are given to people carrying HIV.

Cordyceps has a powerful impact on protozoa (chlamydia, urea plasma, trichomonas, etc.), helminthes (worms), and fungi.

It has been shown that Cordyceps treats cardiovascular diseases effectively. It helps in regulating the blood flow, makes the blood vessel walls become more elastic, and reduces the risk of clogging of blood vessels. In addition, it normalizes the micro flora of the skin, throat and respiratory tract. Cordyceps normalizes kidney function and regulates metabolism.

It is very much recommended to use Cordyceps products if you don't want an acute inflammation turn into a chronic disease.

When used in combination with conventional medications, Cordyceps often significantly increases the effectiveness of such conventional treatments and reduces potential side effects.

Cordyceps products rejuvenate the entire body and its system functions and triggers self-regulating mechanisms.

Cordyceps is widely used as a means for prevention of disease and promotion of health.

[Source of the above information: **Recent Achievements of Ancient Medicine** by Prof. Dr. Arkadijus Gamperis, Medical Doctor and Professor of Oriental Medicine, Vilnius, Lithuania - ISBN 978-609-95273-3-8]

Cordyceps being harvested on the high plateaus of Tibet

The season for harvesting Cordyceps usually starts at the beginning of May and lasts until the middle of June. Harvesting of Cordyceps represents the principal source of income for many Tibetans in the Sichuan, Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan provinces.



The green area marks the region in Tibet and in the Himalayas where Cordyceps is being harvested



A monk from Lithang monastery scans the ground looking for Cordyceps

Most of the gatherers lie on the ground over the high-altitude plateaus, attentively scanning the terrain. The search for the tiny Cordyceps in the high-altitude grasslands, interspersed with small Rhododendron bushes and various vegetation, still dormant at the beginning of spring, is a difficult task, requiring concentration and patience. In fact, the height and thickness of the fungus are so small that it cannot be easily seen. In spring the ground is covered with short vegetation stumps as brownish as the tiny Cordyceps. But Tibetan people generally seem happy to perform this work since it is not considered particularly strenuous, the enterprise is highly profitable, and because they like spending time with each other in the mountains.

The gatherers proceed slowly on hands and knees or bending the body and leaning on a small hoe. They usually carefully scan the area in front of them, keeping their faces close to the ground. If they do not find any Cordyceps in a particular area, they simply move on and start searching for it in an adjacent place. Cordyceps is extracted from the soil with a hoe or a small knife. By doing so, it is important not to damage the larva, because otherwise the Cordyceps would lose quite a bit in value.

In general, not more than 15 to 20 specimen of Cordyceps are being collected by a gatherer throughout a day; some more experienced ones claim that they collect up to 30 to 40 a day. Most of their Cordyceps they then sell on the local market from where it is resold to traders.



The weight of Cordyceps is taken using small scales



Cordyceps on sale at Chengdu medicinal market

[Source of the above information: **Cordyceps sinensis Medicinal Fungus: Traditional Use among Tibetan People, Harvesting Techniques, and Modern Uses** by Dr. Alessandro Boesi and Dr. Francesca Cardi; Photos © by Dr. Boesi]

Some impressive figures about Cordyceps

The annual production of Cordyceps on the Tibetan plateaus is about 100 to 200 tons which equals about 300 to 600 million specimen of Cordyceps with a value for the local people in Tibet of about 350 to 700 million €.

Cordyceps contributes to 95% of the production value of the entire mushroom business in Tibet.

For the Tibetan farmers and nomads the harvesting of Cordyceps has become the most important source of income.

40% of the cash income of the rural population in Tibet (93% of Tibetans live in rural areas) originates from the harvesting and trading of Cordyceps and thus it is a bigger business in Tibet than industry and mining taken together.

A gatherer of Cordyceps can sell *one* specimen of Cordyceps on the local market for an amount between 0.50 and 2.00 €, depending on the mushroom's size, color, and quality. In comparison, an unskilled worker in Tibet earns about 1.50 to 2.00 € a day.

Prices for Cordyceps in recent years rose by over 400%!

Cordyceps of highest quality grade trades for over 40,000 € per kilogram, thus being as expensive as gold!



Cordyceps being processed in a high end store in Chengdu.
Prices here for the highest quality grade Cordyceps can go beyond 40,000 € per kilogram!

[Source of the above information: **The Tibetan Caterpillar Fungi** by Daniel Winkler; Photo © by Daniel Winkler]

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