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Mushrooms have a long history of use in traditional Chinese and Japanese medicine. A myriad of species of mushroom have already been introduced on the supplement market around the world, and testimonies about their health benefits are catching more and more attention today. Maitake or *Grifola frondosa* is just one among the many species that are fast becoming reputed in the world of both recognized and alternative medicine.

Maitake is a Japanese term, which means "dancing mushroom," and is more commonly known among English speakers as Sheep's head or Ram's head because of its physical characteristic resembling a sheep or a ram's fur. It is often mistaken as *Laetiporus sulphureus* or "chicken of the woods," which is also an edible bracket fungus having a similar appearance. The mushroom is native to the northern part of Japan and is used in Chinese and Japanese herbology as an aid to bring altered body systems to a normal level.

When grown on a native soil, maitake can weigh up to 50 lbs or 20 kgs. The heft earns it the title "King of the Mushrooms" and provides abundant supply in a single harvest. In Japan, maitake is used as a popular culinary ingredient together with enoki, shimeji, and shiitake. It is a common ingredient in a wide variety of Japanese steamboat dishes, such as nabemono, which locals believe can improve relationship if served from one pot.

Like most mushroom species, maitake mushroom is commonly used to enhance the body's immune system. Every part of the maitake's body is rich in minerals that help regulate blood pressure, insulin, glucose, and other compounds essential in metabolism. Its potent control over cholesterol distribution in the body makes it excellent in inducing weight loss. Beta-glucan is the main compound that makes maitake an excellent immune system booster.

The minerals in maitake mushroom boost both the innate and adaptive immune system of the body. The innate immune system serves as the first line of defense against pathogens, while the adaptive immune system recognizes and remembers specific pathogens to generate immunity. Studies have shown maitake's ability to cause apoptosis or programmed cell death on cancer cells.

Also showing hypoglycemic effect (the ability to control the production and distribution of glucose in the bloodstream), maitake mushroom can help effectively regulate diabetes. The antioxidants it contains inhibit the production of the enzyme cyclooxygenase, the biological mediator that induce inflammation and pain. Its extract is also found out to be efficient in countering angiogenesis that is often associated with tumor growth.

If you like to read some more on maitake mushroom, Herbalist.com is a reliable source of information. This website provides detailed accounts of herbal and alternative medicine and their health benefits.

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