



History of Coriolus

Learning From Traditional Medicine

Of all the medicinal mushrooms we use from Traditional East Asian Medicine the one most studied by modern scientists is probably the one least known outside of Asia.

Commonly known as the "**turkey tail**" in North America, *Coriolus versicolor* (also known as *Trametes versicolor*), is unique among the medicinal mushrooms, with extensive use in both traditional herbalism and modern clinical practice.

The focus of the modern clinical use and research (over 400 published studies), has been the immunomodulating properties of the hot water extracted polysaccharides. Originally isolated from the fruiting body (the mushroom), sales for these unique all-natural compounds have reached several hundred million dollars a year in Japan and China, making them the most widely used products in those countries by people facing serious immune challenges [\(1\)](#).

Coriolus versicolor is found throughout the wooded temperate zones of North America, Asia, and Europe and may be the most prolific shelf fungus in the Northern Hemisphere. The woody, shelf-like fruiting bodies form dense, overlapping clusters on stumps, tree trunks, and fallen trees. The mushroom caps have a plush velvety surface and are colored in varying shades of brown or gray, with a distinctive pattern of alternating bands of dark and light color.

In Classical Chinese and Japanese herbalism the fruit bodies (mushrooms) are harvested, dried, ground to a powder and made into tea [\(2\)](#). Given the extraction rate of the polysaccharides in a simple hot water extract (tea), it is interesting to note that the dose for the active compounds is the same in both traditional medicine and modern clinical practice.



In China *Coriolus versicolor* is known as "*Yun zhi*", or the "*cloud mushroom*". In Japan it is called "Kawaratake", or "*mushroom by the river*". In traditional herbalism, hot water extracts of *Coriolus* were used to dispel dampness, reduce phlegm, treat pulmonary infections, and to support liver health [\(3\)](#). The Ming Dynasty edition of the *Materia Medica* states that "*The black and green Yun zhi are beneficial to one's spirit and vital energy, and strengthen one's tendon and bone. If Yun zhi is taken for a long time, it will make one vigorous and live long.*" In Japan these mushrooms are also highly prized and sought after by people suffering from a variety of chronic conditions. In fact, it was a neighbor's success in using *Coriolus* for stomach cancer that first caught the attention of a scientist that worked for the Japanese company Kureha Chemicals, and subsequently launched the research and development of what came to be known as PSK. [\(4\)](#).

Based on its reputation for healing within their traditional herbal practices Chinese and Japanese scientists began to do controlled clinical research on concentrated hot water extracts from *Coriolus*, studying the same 1-4, 1-3, 1-6 polysaccharides (beta glucans) that would have been released into solution when making the hot water teas described in the texts from traditional Japanese and Chinese herbalism.

After the placebo controlled, double-blind clinical research demonstrated significant immuno-modulating properties the *Coriolus* 1-4, 1-3, 1-6 polysaccharides (beta glucans) were approved for use by the Japanese Health Ministry, allowing health insurance to cover the cost of its use.

At this point the Coriolus extract was being prescribed by a significant percent of Japanese MDs. Coriolus polysaccharides were used to support immune health after surgical treatment for various conditions and to support and protect immune health in those patients receiving therapies where immune suppression is a prominent feature. Private and government sponsored research continued to monitor the effectiveness of the highly concentrated Coriolus extract in placebo controlled multi-institutional clinical studies, with the clinical evidence demonstrating significant immune benefit from daily use ([5](#),[6](#),[7](#),[8](#),[9](#),[10](#),[11](#),[12](#)).

The Coriolus extract was so successful that the cost to Japan's national health insurance program reached almost a billion dollars a year. In an attempt to reduce expenditures the Health Ministry restricted the use of the Coriolus extract to those people most in need, people receiving chemotherapy or radiation. Clinical research has consistently demonstrated the ability of Coriolus beta glucans to protect, support, and improve immune function in healthy people and those people recovering from surgery and/or receiving treatments where immune suppression is a prominent feature.

For additional information and ordering Coriolus, contact HealthStyles4URx at:

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