**Medicinal Plants for Protecting Body, Mind & Spirit™**

**Protection for the Digestive System**

**Herbal & Nutritional Therapies for Protecting the Digestive System**

**Against Stress, Inflammation, Medications & Pathogens**

**Module 2**

Colleen: Hello, everyone, and welcome to Module 2 of Medicinal Plants for Protecting Body, Mind & Spirit with David Crow titled "Protection for the Digestive System Herbal & Nutritional Therapies for Protecting the Digestive System Against Stress, Inflammation, Medications & Pathogens. This is your host, Colleen, at The Shift Network. We are excited to get going, but first, I do just have a few reminders for you. If you have dialed into MaestroConference with a telephone or with Internet telephony, you can press 5 on your keypad at any time for a technical issue or question and I will come along and assist you. If you are on the webcast and you need any assistance, please type the question directly into the message box and be sure to include your email address so that we may reply to you. If you have any other questions or are in need of support, please do not hesitate to contact our customer support team by visiting our website at support.theshiftnetwork.com. Once again, you can locate your course homepage which is sent in all of your email, and from there you will find all of the information you need, your dial-in information, and any handouts that David will be sharing with us this evening. Just click on the module number which is Module 2 and on the golden Open button. With that, let us begin with David's teaching.

David: Welcome to everyone to Module 2 of Medicinal Plants for Protecting Body, Mind & Spirit. I hope that everybody had a good week and that if you did not join us on the live call last week that you had a chance to catch up on the audio and the transcripts, and I hope everybody also had the opportunity to take a look at the file for the sources. And if you do not already have those herbs in your home pharmacy that you were able to procure them or that they are on the way soon. So as I mentioned, last week I always try to answer all the webcast questions that come in and post them the next week, whichever ones remain. So if you go to the course page and you click on the link for Module 2, that will open up the menu and you will see our files for today and you will see that there is a file for webcast questions from last week that we don't need to take any time this week on that. You can just read through those at your leisure, and I hope you find this helpful.

We have a few more important points to finish from Module 1. And these points actually or not only specific for protecting the respiratory system, but they are also general principles that apply for many of the other topics in future modules. One of the topics that we did not get to last week was herbs and essential oils to help stop smoking and for nicotine withdrawal. Now, before I give the specific ideas on treatment for nicotine withdrawal, I would just like to mention that there is an underlying principle of healing and protecting ourselves that we can see in this specific topic. And this principle is very simple but it is often overlooked, and that is that many times the major thing we need to protect ourselves from is our own habits and our own mind and our own behavior. Therefore, what I have seen in clinical practice is that people often try to get ahead of themselves with various kinds of treatments and overlook the basic things that have to be done first. As we go through the different modules, there are going to be good examples of this at every step. So the protection of the respiratory system doesn't really make any sense if we don't have a basic hygienic lifestyle when it comes to taking care of our lungs. Likewise, if we are thinking about protecting our digestive system, it doesn't make a lot of sense to have a bad diet. The same applies for protecting our liver and protecting ourselves from stress. And so many things that we'll be touching on in this course really come back to what can we do in our individual lives to make certain changes that will have beneficial effects and end up protecting us as opposed to thinking that there are so many dangers out in the world that we need the plants to protect us from that is there, that is true.

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But keep in mind that the major place where we come in contact with the outside world is, number one, our nose, our mouth, our eyes, our skin and our ears. Therefore, if we want to protect the respiratory system and yet we are still smoking. Whether we are using a vaporizer or not or whether it is tobacco or cannabis, there is still an influence that is strongly affecting the mucous membranes and this will have a significant immunological effect. It will make us more susceptible to the external toxins. Therefore, we should be thinking about removing the primary obstacle to healing and making progress first. Now, in the case of the herbs and essential oils that we covered last week, a lot of those are extremely beneficial for reducing cravings for nicotine and treating the kind of respiratory problems that happen after smoking. Because frequently, when a person stops smoking, there is a sensitization that happens and the immune system can go down, there can be congestion, expectoration, increase of respiratory infection and so forth, and so everything we talked about last week can be directly applicable to this subject of stopping smoking at a therapeutic level.

However, I would like to now mention briefly a specific protocol and some specific herbs that can help a lot. This may not apply to you, but it may apply to your husband or your wife or your child or to a friend or a relative. Because nicotine is a very insidious addiction and it's hard for people to stop. But this protocol also applies to other things as well. It's not just nicotine. This is a general protocol for withdrawals, but I'm going to make it very specifically for nicotine withdrawal. But the principles that I'll be sharing are also good for addictions in general. Now, keep in mind that some addictions are much more serious than others, and this is a very individual constitutional issue as well. Some people can stop smoking easily and not start again. Some people have a terrible time with sugar and other people do not. Some people become habituated, addicted to opioid medications, and this is a much more serious level of withdrawal. Some people have habituation and addiction to anxiolytic medications, antidepressants. There are many, many things that we can become habituated to and addicted to, and we have to consider how serious these are on an individual basis. But at the same time, the principles I'm going to give you here are still basic and universal and very helpful. The underlying perspective on this protocol is that external factors ultimately don't have any control over us, and if an addiction develops, it is because there is an internal weakness at various levels. For example, it could be nutritional weakness. It could be a weakness of the nervous system and the endocrine system. It could be a weakness of our willpower. There are many kinds of weaknesses that can be strengthened, and as we strengthen ourselves we become less interested and dependent on a specific substance, because we simply feel better. Now, the longer the addiction has been going on, the more depleted and malnourished the person is, the weaker their constitution and the more there is an association with painful emotional states that are being covered up or managed, the more difficult it will be to stop using a particular substance.

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So let's take a look now at how we can build ourselves up in preparation for withdrawals from various things. This is a good general sequence to keep in mind. First of all, the most important thing to take care of is to improve and support our nutritional status. And that's a basis actually for protection on many levels. That is not just for helping to protect us from bad habits, but it is also protecting our lungs, protecting our digestive system, protecting our liver, everything. So in a fundamental way, everything starts with diet. Now, it makes it easier to reduce consumption of addictive substances in general if there is less sugar and carbohydrate in the diet. Because sugar and carbohydrate metabolism is very much at the root of many types of cravings. So my suggestion, reduce the carbs and the grains and increase the vegetables, and for many people, they really do need some animal protein, and for this high quality animal protein is best. We'll look at the diet in quite a bit more detail a little bit later in this module, which is concerning protecting our digestive system. But for now I'll just mention that aspect of our diet in relation to reducing cravings.

Now, after a person has made some fundamental changes in the direction of a healthier diet, then the next step is to start an herbal program. After this course is finished you'll have a very good idea about the kinds of things that you can do that will be helpful. We've already covered one of the main things for nicotine withdrawal. And that is the aromatic teas that can be taken before and between and after meals, but we would also like to think about some of the bitter herbs that we're going to be discussing in the module to protect the liver and certain types of detox formulas that can be taken before and between the meals that will also be part of this course. And also herbs that are specific for relaxing the nervous system, and that's what I'm going to give you now at this particular time. A list of some of the most important nervine herbs that are really calming because this is one of the main issues with stopping addiction is the nervous stress that comes in the anxiety and the depression and so forth. These steps and several more that I will give you, in case it wasn't clear, are to be taken for a period of time before you stop smoking or attempt to break an addiction.

Along with the herbal program, and in this case for the lungs, specifically the aromatics, you can also bring in the use of the essential oils. Just as we talked about them last week that we'll have a remarkable supportive effect on the respiratory system. That can be very beneficial for not only reducing cravings but also for the cleansing of the respiratory system when you do stop smoking. Again, the oils from last week that I mentioned that are relevant here are all the conifer oils, spruce, pine, fir, juniper and the various species of eucalyptus oils. We can now add a new category of essential oils which are very beneficial, and those are the flower oils. And the flower oils would include lavender and chamomile and geranium. Those would be three of the most basic important floral oils. And these have a significant relaxing effect and a cooling and cleansing effect on the chronic inflammation of the respiratory system as well. We could add another one, which is a bit on the expensive side but very calming for anxiety, and that would be the neroli, the orange blossom oil, and we could also add the entire group of the citrus oils. All the citrus oils would be very beneficial because they have mild anxiolytic and antidepressant benefits. All of these can be blended together with the conifers. They can be blended together with the eucalyptus oils. It's a very flexible approach, and when they're used in the diffuser very safe.

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The next two steps go together. The first is to gradually increase circulation through gentle exercise, if you are not getting it. But also to start practicing relaxation because relaxation is a necessity when we are trying to detoxify. We cannot detoxify effectively if we are not in a relaxed state. As a matter of fact, if there's any triggers for our stress and tension, it's going to be immediately experienced as increased craving. So we have to take some steps to train ourselves to be more relaxed in our nervous system. In many ways, this is actually training ourselves to naturally do what we are attempting to do often with nicotine and cannabis. The next step is to gradually start using adjunct therapies such as massage and acupuncture, or if you can get the Ayurvedic treatments especially the shirodhara, the warm oil cascade over the forehead. All of these are very supportive of deep relaxation and natural physiological detoxification. Now, at this point, after all of these things have been done, then you can start to gradually reduce the intake of the nicotine or the cannabis or whatever it is that you are trying to stop. And then at a certain point, you can create the conditions where you have enough rest and peace and quiet and freedom from stress for a little bit, then you can actually tackle the addiction directly and stop everything. At that point, you should also increase all the things that you are doing with natural medicine. So now I will mention three herbs that can be very effective for reducing the discomfort of nicotine withdrawal as well as reducing and stopping cannabis. And those are the milky oat seed, passionflower and skullcap. I will also mention one that you might find a bit curious for this purpose, which would be the cannabidiol, the CBD oil. I will also mention two new essential oils that you can add to your program from last week and your new expanded aromatherapy program from this week which would be the Bupleurum and the black pepper. Now let's unpack these and look at these in a bit more detail. The three herbs, the milky oat seed and the skullcap and the passionflower are herbs that you are going to hear again in future modules so we don't need to go into them in a lot of detail here. These are herbs that are both a nourishing and relaxing to the nervous system. And so they have good application for protecting us from stress in general, and we can consider nicotine and THC withdrawal a kind of physiological stress. Now the milky oat seed is one of the most important nutritive tonic adaptogen herbs for the nervous system in general. It is very safe. It is very effective. It's good for almost everybody who has an exhausted nervous system, which is almost everybody, and there are practically no warnings or contra indications. Some people may think right away, well, it's oats, therefore, it must have gluten, but tinctures generally do not contain gluten. The milky oat seed tincture is made from the milky latex that forms in the oat seed for only about one week during its maturation, and this has very unique nutritive compounds that support the nervous system and especially nourish the adrenal glands.

So the dose of the milky oat seed tincture is from one half to one teaspoon up to four times a day, and this can be taken in a little water to reduce the alcohol concentration. Some people ask if they can use the oat straw and make a tea, and the answer is yes, but it is nowhere near as potent or nourishing as using the tincture. Now, this particular remedy is very safe and has practically no contraindications or warnings. It can be used widely by everybody who has an exhausted nervous system who needs to get better sleep who has things I rest listeners and so forth. Again, we're going to look at this herb in some further detail when we get to the module on protecting from stress. But for now, you can bring this in to any program before you start the withdrawal process from any type of addiction.

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The next herb I'll mention briefly is a skullcap, and skullcap is a member of the mint family, and it is a very important and very helpful herb in the category of the nervine restoratives. So that should be fairly self-explanatory, which means that it basically helps to restore the function and balance and strength of our nervous system. The way we can think of the effect of skullcap is that it basically relieves tension, tightness, contraction. This is described in Ayurvedic medicine as increase of Vata. Dryness, tightness and contraction are all overstimulation of the nervous system, which is Vata. Therefore, you can use skullcap during withdrawal from addiction to release that deep tension that goes with anxiety and headaches and muscular aches and so forth. You can get skullcap as a dried herb, and you can make a tea with it following the same basic recipe that I presented in Module 1 for the aromatic herbs, which is one teaspoon per cup of water steeped. You want to infuse it, not boil it for about five or ten minutes, and obviously you can make four, six, eight cups at a time. And you can take a dose of about a quarter to a half a cup two to four times a day, or you can get the tincture, which is a little bit easier and you can take in doses of a half teaspoon two, four, up to maybe six times a day in an acute situation. Now, skullcap is generally considered a very safe herb, but I will mention that it's an herb that you should only take for a week or two at a stretch especially at higher doses. So just use it during the acute phase of the withdrawal. There are general concerns about using it during pregnancy and breastfeeding, and if you are on any type of psychiatric medication, it's best to stay away. We can contrast this herb with the milky oat which is so safe that it can be taken for extended periods of time, and there are no significant concerns about herb-drug interaction whatsoever.

The final herb that I will mention here in this withdrawal protocol is passionflower. Passionflower is best used in tincture form. And it is a well-known relaxant, anxiolytic, calming herb that treats a nervous system, and specifically for pain, restlessness, irritability, nervousness and withdrawal symptoms. Again, we're going to look at this herb in more detail later in the course. But for now I just wanted to mention that it is an excellent herb to include for the specific purpose along with the skullcap and the milky oat. There has been some documented research into the use of this herb for withdrawal symptoms, and it has been found to definitely be beneficial and helpful not just for quitting smoking but also for alcohol as well. One thing we should know about passionflower that's very important is that it works on our neurotransmitters specifically, and therefore, there are some herb-drug interactions that we should be aware of. It may potentiate certain prescription medications in the category of sedatives, antispasmodics, MAO inhibitors and anxiolytics. So if you are on any of those medications, don't use passionflower. A safe dose on the tincture starting on the low side would be 20 to 40 drops with some water or with your other tea or tinctures two to four times a day, and you could actually go up to 60 to 80 drops two to four times a day safely if you're not on any of those medications. In general, it's a very safe herb taken at standard dosages.

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Okay, now I will mention CBD oil, cannabidiol oil which has become extremely popular. There seems to be a plethora of new companies offering a multitude of new products on the Internet. I have experimented a little bit being an herbalist and being curious about what's happening, and I have found that there is a wide range of potency. The general effect that I would say you can expect is that it can be relatively pleasant, relaxing, mildly pain-relieving, mildly anxiolytic and so forth, all the things that it is said to do. However, I have noticed that it does have some drawbacks as one would expect with any concentrated herbal extract. It seems to be a little heating to the stomach. It seems to be a little toxic to the liver and the brain. Therefore, I am going to suggest that this be used as a transitional herb for those of you who need it coming off of nicotine and cannabis with THC. This is a good principle for withdrawing from addiction in general is to find things that are somewhat less toxic, and use them in place of your favorite toxin as you are reducing it. There are far too many products and far too many different forms and concentrations for me to make any statements about dosages. But you will see that some sources are listed in the source file. If this is something that interests you, I suggest that you start with a very low dose, see how it feels, give it about 48 hours to feel the full digestive effect and the full impact because it does seem to have a lasting effect that we can notice the next day or two. If you have anything to report, I would be very curious. You can post it on the webcast or you can send it to me in the personal consulting box.

Now, to complete this section, I will add two more essential oils to your aromatherapy regimen. So far you have the conifer oils and the eucalyptus oils and a few of the stronger antimicrobials that I mentioned last week. These are all excellent to use during detoxification from nicotine and cannabis because they are beneficial for the lungs. And they are beneficial for protecting the respiratory system from colds and flus after stopping, which frequently happens. Today I also added another category of essential oils which are the flower oils. These can all be combined in very flexible recipes and proportions. The easiest way to use them, of course, is in the diffuser. But you can see a number of other uses in the file that I gave you last week. And now we can add two more oils. One is black pepper. Black pepper oil has a reputation in aromatherapy now as being an oil that is helpful for nicotine cravings. There has been a study or two done that has shown that yes, it is effective. Therefore, you can include it in your program. Since black pepper is a spice oil, we have some concerns about contact dermatitis, so do not apply it directly to the skin undiluted. My suggestion would be to make a blend of equal parts, one type of your favorite eucalyptus oil and Bupleurum and black pepper. This should be relatively safe to sprinkle a few drops onto a warm wet towel for a compress, put that on the chest or just hold it up to your face and breathe it. Of course, putting these oils together in a diffuser is also perfectly fine.

Now, Bupleurum is an interesting oil. This comes from Corsica and it is a relative of a very important Chinese herb. The Chinese herb is known as Chai Hu, which is the Bupleurum sinensis. This is a close cousin of that species and it has a very similar fragrance indicating very similar chemical compounds and similar uses. In French aromatherapy it is regarded as having a specific purpose, a specific function of helping to reduce nicotine cravings. Now, this is interesting because if you compare the use of the Chinese Bupleurum, what we see is that it is used in formulas to help stop smoking. However, Bupleurum is not considered primarily a respiratory herb. In Chinese medicine it's considered primarily a liver herb. So in this case, what we can see is that an herb that helps our liver and specifically an herb Chai Hu that is known to protect the liver have hepatoprotective effect, and to treat various types of liver conditions is also good for the respiratory system in its essential oil form.

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The way that the Bupleurum works in Chinese medicine as an herb internally is a good example of what we are also trying to accomplish with the general detoxification program that I have just covered. In Chinese medicine Bupleurum is probably the most important herb for smoothing the liver chi in cases of liver chi stagnation. Liver chi stagnation is described in a number of different ways, but the way that we could understand it very simply is that feeling of emotional tension and frustration that makes you want to have another cigarette. Therefore, the Bupleurum, by smoothing the liver chi, it helps to relax that deep tension that craves the nicotine and gets the liver chi smoothing effect from the nicotine. So if we put together all the different parts of the program that I have mentioned, especially the sequential steps leading up to it with increased exercise, increased relaxation, increased nutritional support. And then we start to add in the different therapies of massage and acupuncture and shirodhara, and then we use the herbs that are relaxing to the nervous system and we use the essential oils such as the flowers that are also relaxing. What we can see then is that even though this program is protective of the lungs, what it's really doing is relaxing the stagnant liver chi that is the reason why we try to medicate ourselves with all kinds of different substances.

So we need to close this subject because of time and move on, but I'll just mention that in the treatment of nicotine withdrawal and other withdrawal symptoms that there are actually a wide range of herbs that are used, and I have only presented a few of the most important that I consider to be primary. In addition to what we've just covered, I've also listed a number of products, herbal mixtures, tinctures, blends, formulas that I believe are also very helpful and good representations of the different ways that herbalists approach the detoxification process and treating withdrawal symptoms specifically for nicotine. You will also notice that many of these formulas have herbs that we have already discussed in Module 1 such as the licorice, the soothing demulcent protective herb for the respiratory system and digestive system. And a nourishing immunomodulator that supports the nervous system and adrenals specifically. And then as we go further module by module, you will also be able to go back and look at these formulas and you will know a lot more about the herbs that are in them from other presentations as well. So we have been transitioning a step at a time into Module 2 about protecting the digestive system, and we will do that a bit further now by discussing another very important group of herbs that are for protecting the respiratory system and protecting the digestive system as well, and those are the medicinal mushrooms. There are many species of medicinal mushrooms and they each have their own unique therapeutic functions. At the same time, they all share some general therapeutic functions. There are probably three or four species that are the most well known and most widely used. And these are the Ganoderma mushroom also known as reishi, the Cordyceps, the chaga mushroom and lion's mane. There are some important things to understand about medicinal mushrooms. One of the first is that they can be somewhat idiosyncratic, meaning that people can have different reactions to them. This might be due to the fact that the body interprets the compounds when we consume mushrooms and as being toxic. And this can be a positive thing because it's one of the mechanisms that is stimulating the immune system, or it can be something that can make people feel a little strange.

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Now, I'm not telling you this to discourage you from using these products. I'm just letting you know that sometimes if you take medicinal mushrooms, there are some things that you should watch for. For example, if you take larger doses of them they might give you very interesting dreams or they might have a drying effect in the intestinal system depending on what form you are taking. Now, this is another reason why there are some idiosyncratic results, and that is because there are so many different products that are available in so many different forms. Now, with reishi, it basically comes in three forms, which are the tincture and the capsules of powder, and you can also get the whole mushroom. But the whole mushroom, in order to prepare it, needs to be boiled and the tea from that is extremely bitter and not very pleasant to consume. Chaga also comes in those basic forms, but the difference is that the mushroom is a lot more palatable if you get the whole form. Now to make it even more complicated, the products that are on the market come from either mycelium, which is cultivated or from the fruiting body or from both or from wild harvested sources. There is a bit of controversy about whether the cultivated mycelium is as therapeutically beneficial as the fruiting body. And there are also concerns about where the wild harvested mushrooms come from in terms of environmental cleanliness.

There are also a variety of different extracting methods that are used. The easiest way to solve these complexities is for me to give you a list of sources, various places that I believe have really good products. These are all things that I have tested personally, and I have found them to be beneficial. And companies that I think are doing good work both with ecological harvesting and with high quality cultivation of both the entire mushroom and the mycelium. However, because of all of these different factors, what it really comes down to is that each person has to try different products, preparations and species in different forms at different doses and see how they work for you. This is certainly not a bad thing it's personal research and it's very educational, and it's good for you. Let's go ahead and look at some specific details about the reishi mushroom now. This herb has a very long history of documented use. There are references going back over 2000 years in Chinese medicine to what is called a variety of different things but they all mean pretty much the same thing, which is mushroom of immortality. And anything with that reputation certainly has to be good for us and what we see is that it is used in many different applications with many different therapeutic benefits, so we are going to hear about this first for protecting the lungs. But then we're going to hear about it again for protecting the digestive system and then for protecting the heart and then for protecting the brain. This is a major herb for protection. When we look at its use for protecting the respiratory system, we see, first of all, that it is a primary tonic adaptogen that is suitable for long-term preventive use. It helps us cope with stress. In other words, it's going to be especially beneficial for the respiratory system when we are tired and run-down. The reishi mushroom has specific protective powers for the lungs as well as therapeutic benefits for respiratory conditions. So the first way you can think about it is to take it on a regular basis. If you are feeling that your respiratory immunity is stressed or if you have chronic immunological weakness in general that causes you to get frequent colds and flus, this is a primary medicinal plant that you would like to know about and to use on a regular basis.

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We see that the reishi's immune-boosting powers make it very effective for shortening the response when we are being attacked by wind heat or wind cold in Chinese terms, but it also shortens the convalescent time. If we have been sick that it speeds up our recovery. And it also has a preventive function of protecting against various types of microbial infections that include bacterial, fungal and viral. It is also a major medicine for treating conditions of the respiratory system once they have gotten in, and that means that it is very beneficial for helping with colds and flus. It is calming to the cough and it helps with expectoration. Therefore, we would think of this for not only the onset of upper respiratory viral conditions and influenza and flu and so forth. We would also think about it for adding to our treatment program for that. Several important families of compounds are now known through modern research to be present in the reishi mushroom. One of them is the polysaccharides that are responsible for activating the immune function and specifically stimulating the macrophage activity of the white blood cells. This is similar to what Echinacea does. But we would say that the reishi mushroom is much more immunomodulating in general. It has deep tonifying, strengthening and activating effects for the immune system, but it is much more balancing overall, whereas Echinacea is much more of an immunostimulant. The family of triterpenes are also found in the mushroom and these have specific effects for antiviral powers and also for antihistamine powers.

Now let's take a look at how you can use the reishi. I will suggest that you use one of the products in the source file either in capsules or in tincture form. Again, these are some of my favorites and these are things that I think are excellent products. In general it's a very safe herb to use, and you can easily take a capsule or two, two to three times a day and you can also take 20 to 30 drops of the tincture two to four times a day. We should always consider the timing of when we take different herbs for different reasons. And in the case of the medicinal mushrooms, I personally think that it's best to take them either a little bit before a meal or with a meal. The justification for taking it before is that it will have a more rapid assimilation in an empty stomach, and the justification for taking it with a meal is that mushrooms are frequently consumed as foods. Another important consideration is how do we want to blend herbs to go to different parts of the body? Now, reishi can be used for a lot of different organ systems, and so in this case we would like to direct its powers to the surface, to the wei chi, to the respiratory protection. In general, the herbs that move things upward an outward are the herbs that we use for the lungs such as the aromatic plants. So if you were to make some ginger tea and put some tincture of reishi in it, it would warm the stomach but also open, decongest and support the lungs. Now if we wanted the immune-boosting power of the reishi to go to a deeper level, for example, to boost the immune system at the white blood cell level, we could also think of combining it with astragalus and that is done frequently. We're also going to see that the reishi mushroom is very good for the digestive system, and in that case we could combine it with herbs that are soothing and demulcent and immune-modulating for the digestive system such as licorice.

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Let's move on to the chaga, which is a species of fungus that grows on birch trees in the northern hemisphere. This has a very long lineage of use also in traditional cultures and is now getting a lot of recognition as a new herbal medicine with a lot of very interesting powers. It's very similar to reishi. It is very suitable for long-term use. It has virtually no side effects. It's very good for prevention. It is very good for using during periods of stress and overall an excellent immune tonic for the respiratory system. We can see that it has virtually identical properties as the reishi when it comes to boosting the immune system and protecting against colds and flus and the respiratory system as well as having antiviral, antimicrobial powers. The thing that sets this apart from the reishi is that it appears to have even more pronounced immunomodulating effects for boosting the immune system when it's low or calming it when it is hyper active. This function is again attributed primarily to its family of polysaccharide compounds. It has also been found to have very powerful antioxidant effects. And antioxidant powers as we are going to learn a step at a time are one of the ways that the herbs protect us from a wide range of toxins, inflammation, degeneration and the aging process.

So we can use it virtually the same way for the lungs, for the immune system, for protecting the respiratory system as we did with the reishi. One primary difference is that it tastes a bit better, and we can therefore cook it up in its raw form, which is relatively easy to find. Like the reishi, it comes in the whole mushroom form. It comes in tincture. It comes in capsules. Again, you'll see that I have listed several very interesting places. One of the things that I like to do in herbal medicine is to purchase products from a variety of new places and try them out. So over the last couple of years I've been ordering things from Alaska and from Canada and checking out these new chaga products, and personally, I like them a lot. Now, you can get the fungus itself packaged in chunks and you can basically just take one or two tablespoons of that per day. You can mix it in with a drink. You can simmer it for a little while and make a tea out of it. You can throw it in the soup and so forth. So it's quite easy to use as a food. You can make an infusion from it of one tablespoon of the powdered fungus steeped in a cup of hot water for about 15 minutes, and you can easily consume one of those cups several times a day. Tincture, you can take 30 to 50 drops a day quite easily. There are a few cautions about using reishi and chaga, but they're not serious, and for the most part they're both widely used, well tolerated and minimal risk. But of course, we always start with giving a general word of advice to avoid during pregnancy and during breastfeeding. Also, if you take too much, they can upset your stomach or give you a bit of nausea, and they can also be stimulating. So if you take too much at night, you may find yourself having more energy than you would like as the evening wears on. I found that they can also have a generalized drying type of effect. If you take too many of the capsules, for example, it may dry the intestines a bit.

Now we come to a couple of warnings about herb-drug interactions and contraindications. One contraindication is low blood pressure. I have seen that the use of the medicinal mushrooms can lower the blood pressure, which of course is good with hypertension, but with a tendency towards low blood pressure, it can make it a bit worse. Also, probably the most serious thing to consider here is if you are on medications to prevent clotting disorders, then you should definitely stay away from the medicinal mushrooms. So that concludes the major points from the respiratory module, but we will continue to reference back as we learn other herbs, and discover that there are many other ways that we can protect the lungs. Likewise, we have already started to transition into how we can protect the digestive system because a lot of the herbs that we have discussed in Module 1 up to now and the medicinal mushrooms are also relevant for protecting the digestive system from a wide range of problems, external and internal.

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So as we do when we start a new module, you can go to the course page and you can click on Module 2 link and you will see the file for the general topics that we're going to cover. I'm not going to review the whole thing. I'll just mention the title name here: Protection for the Digestive System: Herbal & Nutritional Therapies for Protecting the Digestive System Against Stress, Inflammation, Medications & Pathogens. So that is our next topic. What are we protecting exactly? We are protecting the entire gastrointestinal tract, of course, including the mouth, stomach, small and large intestine, but really, we are protecting the entire body. Because anything that comes into the digestive system is going to circulate into every tissue and organ and get into every cell. Therefore, digestive symptoms affect every tissue, every organ and have a very strong effect on our mind and our emotional states. So the functioning of our digestive system is strongly linked to other aspects of our wellbeing, including the mental, emotional and spiritual as well as to conditions of inflammation, chronic degenerative diseases, immunological weakness and practically everything else. The digestive system is central to everything. So what are we protecting the digestive system from? Well, as mentioned, we are protecting it from our own mind when it comes to stress. We are protecting it from toxins that come in primarily through the food chain and the water. We are protecting it from pathogens. We are protecting it from illnesses and conditions that can arise within the digestive system and we are protecting it from the adverse reactions of medications. Now, when it comes to protecting the digestive system, there are things we can control and there are things we cannot control. If we are fortunate to be relatively prosperous, we can afford high quality organic food, but that's not the situation for a lot of people. If we have a poor economic situation or we live in an area that we would call a food desert where good quality food is not even available even if we have money, then we will have some challenges. No matter what our economic situation is, we can definitely avoid the worst of the dietary toxins. We can avoid diet sodas and eating junk food and so forth. If we travel, we can control our diet to some degree sometimes, but generally less than if we're home. Sometimes it actually allows us to eat higher quality food.

We can take steps to avoid invasion of pathogens, but they can still invade, especially if we're traveling in unhygienic conditions. We can prevent the need for medications such as antibiotics up to a point, but sometimes they are still needed. And we can make lifestyle changes to reduce stress but it still happens. And now, if we make a good effort to correct our diet and take care of external factors and we do the best we can to protect ourselves from stress, then there's a very high likelihood that we can balance and regulate the digestive function. Through that it will set up the conditions for removing the pathogens. It will remove stagnation. It can reduce inflammation. It can strengthen our assimilation and so forth. Through all of those improvements in digestive function, we will see an increase of digestive immunity. So protecting the digestive system primarily comes down to what we eat and don't eat, and how we assimilate and how we eliminate. Therefore, we can simplify a holistic treatment plan for protecting the digestive system into some basic physiological functions that need to be supported. One, we must have a strong digestive fire. Digestive fire is a traditional concept that we see, which is universal, and it is found in Ayurvedic medicine, Chinese medicine and practically everywhere else. It is Ayurvedic medicine it is called agni, and so we need a strong agni. In Chinese medicine it means we need strong spleen chi and spleen yang. We can translate this into modern terms and we see that there are many correlations such as hydrochloric acid, the flow of bile from the gallbladder, the pancreatic enzymes, and all of the digestive juices that help to break food down, starting with saliva. So to have maximum digestive immunity, our digestive fire needs to be balanced. It should not be too hot. It should not be too cold. It should be just right.

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The next thing that we need is a balanced biorhythm that results in regular cycles of peristalsis. Again, we see that it is a question of not moving too quickly, not moving too slowly. In this case, the traditional language would say that it has to do with the movement of the digestive chi again. And in Ayurvedic medicine we're talking about the movement of the Vata specifically. Now, the third basic function that we need to support and balance is the relationship between the nervous system and the digestive system. Again, this has to do with Vata, which is the nerve current, and specifically where the Vata of the nerve current interfaces with the Vata nerve current of the GI tract. The fourth factor that we need to balance and control is inflammation and acidity. This is associated with stress and pathogens, improper diet and so forth. It is referred to in Ayurveda as excess Pitta that we need to reduce and in Chinese medicine as stomach fire. Now, if all of these basic functions are balanced, then there's a very strong likelihood that we're going to have good assimilation, good elimination, our digestive immunity will be high, and the terrain of the digestive mucous membrane including the bacterial ecology will be strong and healthy and resistant to external and internal factors

Now, there are numerous herbs that do each of these functions of regulating digestive fire, balancing the biorhythm and peristalsis. Balancing the relationship between the nervous system and the digestive system and controlling inflammation and acidity. These different classes of herbs do these functions very effectively especially if they are taken according to the biorhythm of peristalsis and supported by a healthy diet. So we'll go through these different classes of herbs, and as you learn about them you may recognize that there are certain things that you need for your specific situation in your digestive health. I suggest that you try them, get familiar with how they work, and use them as needed. And this is a very important principle about protecting our digestive health and protecting the digestive system in general, and that is working with the digestive system is not a fixed situation. The digestive system is always in motion, and therefore, we need to understand the rhythm and how to regulate the rhythm and the temperature. Those are the two primary factors that we can boil all this down to: rhythm and temperature and knowing how the herbs affect temperature and affect rhythm. We can then apply them to balance and protect.

So I will introduce these categories of herbs first, and then we will go back and look at the specifics about them. The first category are the herbs that are known as bitters. These herbs have several very important functions including increasing the flow of digestive secretions, increasing our appetite, increasing assimilation, increasing and supporting peristalsis. They have antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory powers, which means that they protect against infections. They are hepatoprotective. And they are cholagogue, meaning that they simulate the production and the flow of bile from the liver. The next major category are the aromatic herbs, and these are herbs that we have already introduced because they also work on the respiratory system. Now, the aromatics also have a lot of the same functions as the bitters. They also increase the flow of the digestive secretions and increase our appetite, increase assimilation, increase peristalsis.

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They also have significant antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory powers and protect against infection, but they work in different ways. The bitters are based on alkaloids primarily. The aromatics are based primarily on essential oils. In addition to the benefit that are similar to the bitters, they also reduce gas and bloating, meaning that they are carminative. They're also antispasmodic. They also are expectorant to the lungs. They also are primary herbs for boosting respiratory immunity, and that makes them a bit different than the bitters. We can also include the use of essential oils and aromatherapy applications for enhancing peristalsis and supporting general digestive comfort. The next major category of herbs are the demulcents. These are herbs that have a mucilaginous quality. They are soothing to the digestive lining specifically. They are significantly anti-inflammatory and they also can be bulking agents that can give a mild laxative effect. The fourth category are the nervine herbs, specifically the nervine relaxants. These work on the interface between the nervous system and the digestive system, and this is the primary group of herbs that we use to protect the digestive system from nervous stress. Finally, the last category are herbs that have an antispasmodic effect specifically on the intestinal system. So between these five categories of herbs, we have a tremendous pharmacy available to us that can help us to regulate the digestive fire, its temperature, the biorhythm of the peristalsis and support overall digestive health.

Now, some of you might be wondering if I'm going to include some discussion on probiotics in this section, and the answer is yes, they are very important especially for recovery after multiple courses of antibiotics. However, what I have found in clinical practice is that probiotics themselves can be a bit difficult to assimilate and can cause some digestive disturbance. And it's very difficult to rebuild the bacterial ecology if our digestive fire is low and the peristalsis is irregular. Therefore, if we balance the digestive fire and the peristalsis first, then the bacterial ecology tends to be supported naturally and is naturally enhanced. Otherwise, the probiotic supplementation can just cause an increase of symptoms. We'll talk more about this a little bit further on. Now let's spend a few minutes covering some dietary principles for protecting and healing the digestive system. The most important concept of course is that it doesn't make much sense to try and protect our digestive system if we have a bad diet. As it is said in Ayurvedic medicine, if you have a good diet you don't need doctors or drugs, and if you don't have a good diet, you don't need doctors or drugs. Meaning that if we have a good diet that it is going to protect our digestive system, protect our health, support our health because we'll be getting high quality nutrition, and that will support detoxification. But on the other hand, if we don't have a good diet, then we're basically wasting our time and money going to doctors and trying different programs. So the diet is the starting point for protecting our health. A healthy diet is of course not just the foundation for protecting our digestive health. It also is the foundation of protecting all the organs. This is why it's important to take a look at the dietary principles early on because this will have a huge impact on protecting the liver, protecting the heart, protecting the brain, the nervous system, protecting the musculoskeletal system and everything else that we are trying to protect. So I think we can all agree on these basic principles that a healthy diet is good, but now comes the more complicated question of what is a healthy diet and that's where the discussion becomes complex and in many cases very passionate also. So there are countless diets. There are countless approaches to diet. There are countless sources of information about various diets. Diets tend to be very trendy. It gets very confusing for people. People also in my opinion become unhealthy if they get overly concerned.

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The reason that I say that is because I have traveled extensively and I have seen hunger in the world. I have seen malnourishment. I have seen people who live on extremely limited diets. So I have a personal philosophy that tends to be a little bit more holistic than being concerned about specific diets. In addition to what I have seen in my travels, I also am fairly aware of what's happening with climate change and the kind of impacts that this is going to be having more and more on agriculture. So when I hear people passionately debating things about this diet is most important or that diet is most important. Where I go is back to simply being grateful that we even have the opportunity to discuss these things, whereas a lot of people in the world don't have that opportunity and are simply going to be having another bowl of rice and simple vegetables again, if they're fortunate. So let's start by protecting ourselves from unnecessary concerns, obsessions, neuroses about what type of diet we should be following for our specific body type and so forth. We can do this by practicing gratitude and thanksgiving and recognizing how fortunate we are that we have so many food choices that we can actually have this conversation.

So my personal philosophy about food, therefore, is a middle path between the Ayurvedic proverb that if we have a good diet we don't need doctors or drugs, and a saying from Hippocrates who said that it is better to have a small amount of something which is not good for you if you enjoy it than to have a large amount of something which is good for you if you don't enjoy it. Now, it's one thing to have healthy digestion and yet be overly concerned about our diet, but it is another thing to not know what is doing what in our body and to have to try various programs without good results. The biggest problem is not knowing what is causing our digestive system problems and what to do about them. One of the complicating factors of the diet is that every constitution has different requirements. There are different requirements at different ages. There are different requirements in different climates and our nutritional needs can change rapidly according to health and illness, and this can have a major impact on our digestive function as well. For example, we can have excellent digestive health one day and lose it within a few days because of needing to take antibiotics. Therefore, digestive health is really a pretty vast and complicated topic and what it really comes down to is that we have to ultimately learn how to listen to the body, how to treat ourselves. And this requires education and some experimentation, but the difficulty with experimentation is that we have to be very patient because the digestive problems can heal very slowly. Now, unfortunately, trying different diets can cause increased damage and I've seen this a lot in clinical practice where people feel that they need to do a detox and it causes further weakening of the digestive function. This is very common actually. Now, what we see is that even when people eat a good diet, even when we are taking in high quality food, it can turn to poison and cause all kinds of symptoms if our digestive system is not working right. But on the other hand, we can also tolerate low quality food, and it can be assimilated and eliminated properly if our digestion is strong. So here are my basic suggestions just as a starting point, and then when we get into talking about the use of the herbs, we'll go in a little bit more detail of how we can use herbs with certain kinds of foods and so on. First, if you are fortunate to be able to afford high quality organic food, then do that, and avoid obvious toxins. Everybody at all socioeconomic levels can avoid drinking diet sodas and eating junk food.

**[1:10:07]**

If you have digestive weakness in general, it is better to eat it kind of baby food diet, meaning the food is soft, warm, easy to digest. And if you have sensitivity to grains, gluten especially, reduce them. And if you are having digestive problems and you haven't experimented with this, try it because some people really notice that they feel a lot better and their digestive system works a lot better with less grains and gluten. Of course, common sense, chew your food well, and we're going to talk about saliva here in just a minute. Don't drink a lot of fluids with the meals in general, but have plenty of fluids, especially the aromatic teas that are very supportive for digestive function between meals. I'll just mention here, not everybody needs eight glasses of water per day. Warm foods are better in the winter, and as we get older, we tend to need more meat. This is something that can be very controversial for people, but the question comes, are you listening to the needs of the body primarily or are you following an ideology primarily? This is where big conflict comes for people because they feel they would like to follow an ideology of being vegetarian or vegan, and yet, the body is telling them something different. This is something that I have no personal judgment about, and I don't think that we should have judgment. It's just purely a question of which do we want to follow, what the body is telling us or what our spiritual philosophy is telling us?

Finally, keep the sugars down, and for a lot of people, keeping the carbohydrate intake at the lower end of the scale works better. Don't be afraid to eat healthy fats and oils. All right, so that's a very brief summation of a few dietary principles, and I would just wrap it up by saying that as our digestive system improves by using the herbs that we will be able to expand our diet and eat things that we were previously not able to digest well or had food sensitivities to and so forth. So the goal is strengthening the digestive fire and regulating the biorhythm of the peristalsis. And from that, the dietary concerns become less. But on the other hand, if those basic functions are not working well, the diet can be very complicated and finding the right things that are digestible can be an ongoing frustrating search. Now I'll just mention my personal history here, which is that I have traveled extensively as you know, as I've mentioned, and as a result of that, I have become an expert without even wanting to in treating digestive problems that come from bacterial and parasitic infections of the intestines. I went through a lot of time suffering from digestive problems from a multitude of real parasites and digestive infections. And what I can say is that it is possible to use herbs, and sometimes we do need some allopathic medications to eradicate some organisms, but it is possible to restore digestive health. I have seen this in clinical practice also that even after years and years of chronic frustrating conditions that people can get better.

Now, if we have a good diet, then it will start to balance and restore our digestive function and protect us from a number of different external pathogens, but we also have to consider one of the most basic factors here, which is the condition of the digestive fire. Now, the condition of the digestive fire paradoxically is related to the water element, and that is the role of saliva. As we go into the herbal treatments here shortly, we're going to see that there are a number of herbs that support the flow of saliva and a number of treatments that we can use to increase the flow of saliva because this is where the digestive process starts. The role of saliva tends to be overlooked, but it is incredibly important not just for our digestive health but also for dental health as well. Saliva activates and stimulates all of the digestive juices. Therefore, we could say that it is agni within water, meaning the enzymatic powers of transformation and activating the digestive fire. Saliva has a lot of very important antibiotic compounds and natural immune-enhancing compounds in it that help to protect the mouth from infection and to protect the entire digestive system.

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Unfortunately, there is an epidemic of dry mouth, and this is happening for many different reasons. Some are obvious such as smoking and alcohol and bad diet, and some are not so obvious such as stress. This is because there are two types of saliva. There is the saliva that is stimulated by the sympathetic nervous system when we are under stress, which tends to be thick and sticky and go primarily to supporting the lungs for our fight or flight response. And the other is the parasympathetic saliva, which is more liquid and sweet, and this is the type that we would like. We would like to activate the flow of parasympathetic saliva for maximum digestion. Of course, this is why it is always suggested that when we eat we should not be under stress. Ayurveda says when we eat we should either be alone and peaceful or we should be laughing with our friends. I will also mention that one of the primary causes of the modern epidemic of dry mouth is medications. Almost all medications impact the digestive system adversely in some ways, and that includes drying out the salivary glands. Fortunately we can correct this problem both with herbs and some simple exercises. And so I will give you an exercise that comes from qigong which is called gathering the jade juice, which is nothing more than accumulating a large mouthful of saliva, and then visualizing that it is charged with prana and chi and then swallowing it. This has some pretty remarkable effects actually on improving our overall digestive function, reducing acidity symptoms in the stomach and protecting the teeth and gums from infection. The way this is done is very simple. You just close the mouth and you lift the tongue up to cause the salivary glands underneath the tongue to start creating saliva. You can swish the saliva around as it starts to come out, and that stimulates more. You can rub the tongue around on the teeth and gums and that will stimulate more to come out. And as more saliva starts to accumulate, you can swish it around and swish it around. You may notice that you have difficulty with this at first, but eventually you will get a nice big mouthful of saliva. Now, the classical qigong method is to visualize that through the crown chakra, top of your head, that pure moonlight is flowing into the mouth and is charging the saliva with a kind of sweet nectar. And you will notice that as you swish the saliva around, it does actually become more sweet in flavor.

Finally, you simply swallow it and this will start to support the digestive system in many ways. In Ayurvedic terms we would say that this will increase your digestive agni and at the same time that it will reduce the acidity of the digestive Pitta. In Chinese terms we would say we are supporting the spleen yang. Basically what you'll start to notice is that if the acidity is high it will start to lower it in the stomach, and if the hydrochloric acid is low, it will start to increase it. My suggestion is that you do this exercise several times a day, especially if you have symptoms of chronic dry mouth. And if you do, you probably have associated problems with dental issues and general weakness of the digestive system, and probably some of that may be linked directly to overstimulation of the sympathetic nervous system with stress as well. Simply doing this will begin to assist you in increasing the flow of the parasympathetic type of saliva which will start to retrain the digestive system to function at a higher level.

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Another aspect of our digestive fire is the condition of our hydrochloric acid. When the hydrochloric acid is balanced, we would say in Ayurvedic terms that our digestive agni is balanced. But if it is low, we would say our agni is low, and if it is high, we would say we have excess Pitta, which is excess acidity. The thing that's confusing about hydrochloric acid is that many times the symptoms of acidity in our stomach with heartburn and GERD, gastric esophageal reflex disorder, are actually due to deficiency of hydrochloric acid as opposed to excess. Since this is a primary aspect of digestive health that is necessary to understand to protect our digestive system, I'll spend just a minute with it and explain that if you have acidity and you are younger, then it's more likely that you have true acidity with a propensity to gastritis and excess hydrochloric acid, especially if you have a lot of stress or smoking and there's alcohol. But on the other hand, as we get older, the hydrochloric acid secretions decrease. And therefore, the acidity and reflux symptoms are more often related to deficiency of hydrochloric acid and many people are on medications thinking that they actually have hyperacidity and they have hypoacidity. The herbs can play a very important role in regulating and correcting this problem because basically what's happening is that because of the deficient hydrochloric acid secretion, food stagnates in the stomach and the pyloric splinter does not open properly, therefore causing reflux and acid increase.

So we could say quite simply that there are two types of gastric acidity. One is the deficient type and one is the excess type. The deficient type would be the type that people would take hydrochloric acid supplementation, and they would actually feel better because it is giving some support to their digestive fire in their stomach. Whereas the excess type is going to be the type that if you were to take hydrochloric acid as a supplement, it would worsen the symptoms of acidity. I mentioned this because our first group of herbs really will help to address the deficient type of acidity, deficient hydrochloric acid secretions, and those are the bitter herbs. There are many bitter herbs and they have many different functions and subcategories of functions, but as I mentioned earlier, the bitter herbs in general are used to increase the flow of digestive secretions such as hydrochloric acid. Therefore, they also increase appetite. They are appetizing. They will also increase assimilation because they are activating the flow of the digestive juices including saliva also and pancreatic enzymes and bile and so forth. And they also have antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory powers, which is where we get a lot of the protection. They also have liver-protecting, hepatoprotective functions as well.

So digestive bitters are a very old and well-known form of herbal medicine. It's been around a long time. There are several species that are quite famous for this. We tend to see this tradition more in Western herbology than in Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine, and that is the use of the herbs taken as a concentrated bitter flavor to stimulate the digestive juices before eating a meal. The herbs that are typically used are gentian, artichoke leaf, burdock root, wormwood leaf, dandelion root and several others. But I am not going to give you the specific instructions on each species because I'm going to suggest instead that you work with some of the very easily available numerous types of recipes and concentrated tincture products that are easily found. For this you can refer to the source file again. There are some really excellent high quality herbal bitter products that are available. But the most important information that we should consider is who should use these and who should not use these. Again, this goes back to determining if you have true excess hyperacidity or if you have symptoms of hyperacidity as a result of hypoacidity. So let's break it down just a little bit more. Herbal bitters will work best when there is low hydrochloric acid. They can aggravate conditions of excess hydrochloric acid and gastritis.

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So how do we determine? Well, we can look first at the function of the bowel movements, the peristalsis and the bitters definitely work better for people who are more constipated and stagnant, and that's because they are cholagogue, which means they cause secretion of the bile, which is a laxative. And if you have constipation, you might also have a history of using stimulant laxatives to get the colon moving. But it's actually better to use bitters to stimulate the flow of bile instead to help to regulate peristalsis. So this is one of the first basic criteria. If you have more stagnation, gas, bloating, tendency to sluggish bowel movements, the bitters are definitely much better for you than if you have loose stools, tendency to diarrhea.

Another major criterion is our age. That is people in their 20s, 30s, 40s are probably going to have more of a tendency to have excess hydrochloric acid, where as when we get into our 50s, 60s and 70s we definitely are starting to lose the secretions. Therefore, if you have the constitution where you are on the older side and you have stagnation in the digestive system with a tendency to constipation and gas and bloating that's really the ideal picture for using bitters. You can also confirm this by simply taking a dose of the bitters, and I would say for a small experimental dose you could start with 10 drops in a quarter cup of water about 10 or 15 minutes before meals and see how it feels, and if it feels fine, the next day you could double that dose up to 20 drops and a typical standard dose would be somewhere between 20 30 to 40 drops. It's very flexible, and on the individual products you're going to see some recommendations for dosage. But in general, the bitters are quite safe for everybody. I would just say that the only real contraindication is if you do have true gastritis and true inflammatory problems of the bowels as opposed to the assiduity appearance, which is really coming from low hydrochloric acid.

I'll mention one more very important consideration for people taking bitters, and that is if you have a propensity to hypoglycemia, low blood sugar. The bitters can aggravate that especially if you take them and then you don't eat a meal. So I always suggest that if you are using bitters, make sure that you eat within 15 or 20 minutes afterwards, because otherwise, the activation of the digestive juices can start to cause some discomfort from the acidity, and it can also make you feel a bit hypoglycemic. Otherwise, bitters are very safe and effective for a wide range of digestive problems, and we're also going to be hearing about them a lot in the next module where we'll be talking about protecting the liver because many of these herbs have dual functions of not only regulating the digestive peristalsis and having a multitude of benefits for the digestive system but also are used for hepatoprotective effects.

Unfortunately, our time has run out again. That's because there are so many things to talk about. But I would like you to review the file for the sources and take a look at the links that are given there because this is actually a really good educational resource. Not only can you procure the products, but you can also study the thinking behind how the products are made. So what I would like you to look at is especially for the bitters, the formulations. What you will notice is that the digestive bitter formulas are a mixture of a primary bitter herb or two and a number of aromatic herbs. Now, the aromatic herbs are put in to prevent what used to be called griping, which is the uncomfortable spasms that can happen when people take laxatives. But it is also to balance the harsher effects of the bitter herbs on the intestinal lining and especially in stimulating the digestive juices as well as hopefully make the preparation a little more palatable.

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So go to the links for the digestive bitters products and look at the ingredients, and what you will see is the frequent use of gentian, a primary bitter herb, regular use of artichoke leaf, burdock, wormwood, dandelion. Those are the main ones that are used, but you will also see that they are almost always combined with aromatic such as ginger, anise, fennel, cardamom, various mints, sometimes hyssop, lemon balm, and frequently also extracts of citruses and sometimes a little bit of an essential oil for flavoring as well. If you don't have a background in herbal medicine, I just want to mention that this combination of bitter herbs to stimulate the digestive secretions combined with aromatic herbs that have a carminative digestive soothing kind of effect is actually brilliant. And it is one of the unique innovations of the European Western herbal tradition that is seen to some degree sometimes in Ayurvedic and Chinese medicine, but this represents a very specific group of formulas that are quite specialized and very beneficial in modern Western herbology.

There are some very important symptoms and signs to watch for when you start taking the bitters and the aromatics together as you will find in these formulas. First, they will stimulate increased salivary flow and that goes very nicely with your practice of doing the gathering of the jade juice, and I suggest that you could actually do that qigong exercise of increasing the flow of saliva first and then take a dose of bitters. And that way you will get even more increased digestive power through the flow of the digestive agni that is in the water element of the digestive juices and saliva. You will notice also that there is decreased stagnation in the stomach and intestines. You should notice also that you have an increase of appetite. That's good because it will be accompanied by increase of assimilation. You should also see slightly increased bowel movements. You should, however, also notice that the bowels are more comfortable. In general, if any of the opposite symptoms occur, it means that you shouldn't be using bitters. So if you are getting increased stagnation or decreased appetite or really irritable diarrhea, decreased bowel comfort, then you should immediately stop the bitters. Okay, our time is up for this week, but we will continue. We have some further explorations of how to protect the digestive system. And we also will start to transition into the module on how to protect the liver, and they are of course very closely related. So now we can go ahead and switch over to our question and answer session.

Colleen: Wonderful, David, thank you so, so much. I just want to let everyone know how they can ask you a question. If they're on the phone, they can press 1 on their telephone keypad. If they're on a webphone, of course, then they would press 1 on their keypad that's on their screen. And if they're on the webcast, which means they're listening over the Internet, please type in your question in the box provided. So David, it's over to you.

David: Okay, great. Thank you, Colleen, again, and thank you to everybody for so many questions. It looks like this discussion has really stimulated people's interest, and this is good. Unfortunately, there are lots of big subjects here, and so I'm going to end up answering a lot of these on the file for next week. Let's just go ahead. I'll review a few of these here quickly, and then what I'd like to do is answer a couple of the ones that several people have asked about and also some of the things that are going to take more time to answer. Rather than writing a whole page of information, I'll give a little discussion about it.

**[1:35:02]**

So one thing, will I elaborate on herbal remedies for parasites and bacterial infections? Yes, that's a very big part of the first part of the module next week. I'm going to be giving you some specific protocols. What I'm giving you here are some general concepts about regulation of the digestive system. But then we're going to get into some actual treatment systems, and that's a fairly complicated talk. Let's see, one question here. What's my opinion about raw vegan? Because it seems quite contradictory to both Chinese medicine and Ayurvedic medicine, how would you balance it? Well, you see, this is what I mean by a big subject. We could talk quite a long time about. Now, the most important thing to remember, as I mentioned, is we at some point in our life may come to a place where we have to make a decision about whether we are listening to the messages from the body or whether we want to follow an ideology. Now, if the messages from the body and our ideology are in harmony, well, that's great. That means the philosophy of life that we have and our feelings about eating meat or animal products, if they are in alignment with what the body is telling us and our body is telling us that, oh, I feel great without animal products. Then this is perfect and there's no concern about what Chinese or Ayurvedic medicine says. Your body is telling you that it's all good and you can feel very good about following that.

Now, there are some inherent problems, however, with long-term raw and vegan diets. I'll just mention them and you may or may not agree, but I am just pointing these out from my clinical practice and from the general traditional view of these medical systems also. One is that long-term protein deficiency can develop. And of course, that may be something that you can overcome with a very, very careful diet. That's a general rule that if you are a vegetarian or a vegan or you are on a limited diet of some sort you have to be much more careful, and the herbal medicines can also be supportive of that actually. So we see in Ayurvedic medicine, which is from India, which is primarily from the Hindu tradition, which is heavily vegetarian that there are things like chyawanprash, tonic types of formulas that are very nutritive. And we should think about supplementing with stronger heavier richer food that may make up for some of the deficiency in our diet of animal products and specifically protein. The other major thing to consider is that India is a pretty warm climate, and it may be difficult for a lot of people to be on a raw vegan diet in Alaska. Maybe not. That is a constitutional issue and what I can say is that the strong Pitta people are going to do much better with a lighter vegetarian type of diet and raw food and that's because they tend to run hot. A Kapha person may benefit tremendously also, but it's the Vata person who is going to have more trouble. That means the person who is already struggling to keep weight on, the person who tends to run cold, the person who tends to be dry. This of course is the constitution that emerges as we get older. So the other factor here is that there's a big difference in what our dietary needs are as we get older, and it's easier to be a vegetarian and a vegan when we're younger and we're in a warmer climate. So those are a few basic principles.

Now, what I will say from clinical practice is that I have treated a lot of people who over time develop some pretty serious deficiencies and some pretty serious immunological weakness and digestive weakness as well and they got to the point where their ideology and their body sensations and their health were so out of alignment that they finally had to diversify their diet and they started really paying attention to their cravings for meat. And they noticed that when they eat the meat that their immune system came back up and they felt warmer and a lot of their symptoms cleared up and so forth. So that's what I'm saying about listen to the body.

**[1:39:55]**

If you don't want to do that, well, that's an individual choice. I spent several months in a monastery in China during the winter several years ago. People knew my background and many of the monks and nuns came to me and they said, "I feel terrible since I have moved to the monastery and I know it's because I'm on a vegetarian diet and it's cold and rainy. What do you suggest?" Well, that's a difficult question to answer because resources are limited and so forth. So there were some things that could be done with Chinese herbology to strengthen and tonify. But again, that's the main answer that I typically give for that complicated question. It's a good very good question related to diet and protecting ourselves in the digestive tract and also protecting our immune system, because if we're on the wrong diet for our body, then we're going to suffer. Okay, lots of questions came in about the medicinal mushrooms, but actually, Colleen, I'm going to pause here before I go on to that and I'll just open it up and see if anybody is waiting on the line.

Colleen: Wonderful. Thank you, David. We have [Participant]. Go ahead please, [Participant].

Participant: Thank you. On some of the digestive pills and bitters and stuff that I've seen, there are warnings about if you have any gallbladder problems not to take it, and I'm just wondering if you could respond to that. And particularly actually dandelion is what I remember on some of the herbal products.

David: Right, and that's in the general pattern that I described of having true hyperacidity and gastritis. Yes, if you have true hyperacidity, gastritis, there's a very high likelihood that you're also going to have a propensity towards gallbladder problems and vice versa. So yes, thank you for pointing that out. That is a very important point. If you have active gallbladder disease, let's just put it that way, if you have active gallbladder disease, best to stay away from bitters. Otherwise, just follow the basic protocols that I gave. So as we go into some of the bitter herbs a little bit more in detail because in our next module we're moving into protection of the liver, and so that's the natural place to unpack that a little bit more because the bitter herbs are going to be the primary feature. We still have a ways to go on the protecting the digestive system, but that's all part of the liver system also. So I will unpack that particular point a little bit further. But yes, thank you for adding that particular warning. I would just say the primary concern is active gallbladder disease, active cholecystitis, things like that. But that's again an inflammatory condition of the upper GI tract. So thank you.

Participant: Thank you.

David: Good additional comment. Okay, so let me jump into several questions here related to the mushrooms because the mushrooms are a bit problematic for some people, and so I'm just going to read several of these questions all together here. What are your thoughts on mushroom coffee? Mushroom coffee with Cordyceps in individual packets? Well, I don't think that it's particularly high quality to do it that way. I mean I like really high quality organic coffee freshly ground, and then I like really high quality Cordyceps. I've never seen those two things combined. I suppose you could do it, but I would separate them. I mean we also have to think about the biorhythm, and this is something I'm talking about next week is when do we take particular substances? So I don't advise, for example, mixing bitter stimulants such as coffee or the bitters formulas necessarily with the mushrooms. My own personal approach is to put the mushrooms in a different time during the day, and I'll elaborate on that next week. So that they work a little bit more on their own, so that they're not mixed so much. That's a big factor is how our herbs mix together and what kind of effect is that going to have. So that particular concept, well, I don't know. You could try it. I wouldn't be a fan of it myself. I would separate them.

**[1:44:37]**

Now a couple other things. Can you comment on the sometimes contradictory information and philosophies on mushrooms? Some theories say that mushrooms are fungus and therefore should not be recommended for people prone to Candida or even cancer. I know that there's contradictory information about that, but from my studies, mushrooms are actually beneficial to support the bacterial ecology of the gut, and I don't think that there's any real concern with Candida. It's a bit of a contradiction and a little bit paradoxical, but I don't think that Candida is the primary concern. Next week when I give you the protocols on infection of the gut from parasites and bacteria, I'm also going to give some protocols on how to restore healthy bacterial flora, and the mushrooms are a very big part of that. So that's my particular observation and the information that I've received.

Okay, so going on with that comment. However, there are other theories that mushrooms are good for those in remission from cancer. Now, let's just put the cancer discussion on hold a bit. And we'll come back to it because what's going to happen is that the discussion about mushrooms is going to happen over and over again throughout the course. So I introduced it first as general immunoprotection for the lungs. Next, in the next module, I'm going to unpack it a bit, immunoprotection for healthy gut. And then there's going to be discussion also about hepatoprotective functions and neuroprotective functions. So the mushrooms are a bigger subject that are going to appear over and over again. Are dried mushrooms better than fresh and so forth. My suggestion is rather than worry about or be concerned so much about fresh and dry, my suggestion is let's focus on the really good products that are there because that is one thing that is part of this herbal golden age that we should be aware of. And that is that there are more high quality mushroom products available to us certainly in North America than at any time basically in history. The only exception to that, I would say, is that in certain parts of Asia, a lot of mushrooms are available as part of the diet. But in terms of concentrated products, high quality extracts, tinctures, different forms of mycelium, all kinds of new innovative methods where definitely we have access to wonderful things, and that's the way we should think about it.

One last thing here about mushrooms, and then it just seems like the time just goes so quickly. Maybe I just ramble. Thank you for the overcoming addictions discussion. You are most welcome. My inquiry is related to any concerns about allergies to mushrooms. Now, this is one of the things that I mentioned in this module and that is that mushrooms are very idiosyncratic actually. And it's not so much a concern about the Candida issue. It's really a concern about individual allergic reaction. An individual allergic reaction is very important to consider. Another question here basically is are there any other alternatives for these mushrooms if you are allergic to all mushrooms? Well, first of all, I would say I don't think you know whether you are allergic to all mushrooms because there are so many species and the species are so different, even just the ones that are available commonly. There's literally probably 15 or 20 major species of mushrooms that are available for medicinal purposes. And so I don't think that you could actually say that you know that you're allergic to all of them, but at the same time, I wouldn't want you to experiment. If you know that you have a general allergy to mushrooms, we could probably say yes, it's probably true. So let me just answer that by saying that mushrooms have certain functions, and if you are allergic to them, you shouldn't use them. Whatever functions you are trying to get from the mushrooms, you can get from other herbs. So if you are looking at the immune-boosting properties of the mushrooms for the lungs, there's a whole group of other herbs that will do that. If you're looking for the neuroprotective effects for the brain, there's lots of other herbs that will do that. We will cover all of those as we go module by module. You will be surprised at how quickly the number of herbs accumulate that we are talking about and how quickly our pharmacy can increase over the weeks. That would be the simple answer, which would be we can explore other alternatives.

**[1:49:56]**

Now, let me just wrap it up briefly with the allergy statement. If you know that you are allergic to mushrooms, don't use them. That is really the primary concern. It is very idiosyncratic and that was how I introduced this particular topic was saying there are so many species, there are so many different ways that they're extracted, they come in so many different forms, and people have very individual reactions. And I gave the general idea about what to watch out for. So if you know that you have difficulty with them, just don't use them. That's all. That's one of the mean things to always consider with all herbal products. You may not get along with something. So Colleen, I guess there's a couple more people calling in. So why don't we take another call?

Colleen: Wonderful, thank you so much. We're going to a caller that's called in on the general PIN from the area code 516. You have the mic.

Participant: Is that me?

David: I can hear somebody.

Participant: Yeah, it's [Participant]. How are you?

David: Good. Welcome.

Participant: So I know you said you would get into medicinal mushrooms more, and what I'm asking about specifically is that you had mentioned lion's mane, but you didn't get into detail. So is that something that you personally have experienced with and are we going to get into that in another module?

David: Yes, we're going to get into that specifically in the module for protecting the nervous system. Somebody else was asking about that and gave a very nice testimonial here also that you can read next week when I post the file. Lion's mane is a very, very important medicinal mushroom, and it works primarily in the brain and the nervous system. That's where we're going to look at that. So as I said, the medicinal mushrooms are going to pop up in many modules. So good. Thank you for your interest in that particular mushroom. It's very, very important actually.

Participant: Yeah, Paul Stamets is calling it the smart mushroom.

David: That's a good thing to call it actually. I believe it's probably true. I do have some experience with it, and so far my cognitive function, as far as I can tell, is still intact, and maybe part of that is due to that. But as I often say, a lot of the progress or the benefits that we're looking for with long-term herbal medicine, and as I mentioned in Module 1 a lot of times when we're using herbs for protection, we're not looking for dramatic results. We're looking for long-term results where we just notice that all of our friends who have been so stubborn and are not listening to our herbal advice are just aging faster than we are and that means something. So the mushrooms, there's a lot of information, and of course the reishi mushroom, the mushroom of immortality is renowned for being a mushroom that supports longevity and specifically gives wisdom of the spirit while supporting longevity. Reishi is also good for the brain. Many of these medicinal mushrooms are good for the nervous system as well as the lion's mane. So thank you. We will unpack that. So Colleen, let's go ahead and take the last call if there is one more call, and then I'm going to start to get in trouble if I keep on going.

Colleen: Yes, this is our last call. Thank you so much, David, for taking all of these. This is said general PIN area code 816, you have to microphone.

Participant: Hi, thank you. This is [Participant] and my question is brief. Will you cover in some of the modules hormonal therapy? Those of us who do mental health, we understand that a lot of the argument and upsets and irritability comes as a result of hormonal imbalance. Will you be able to cover it at some point? Because it's a very broad subject, but hopefully we can get something that will help us to help those who are in need of hormonal replacement and attempting to straighten their life lives out and just have balance. Thank you.

David: Yes, [Participant], very good. Thank you for your question and for your concern, and the answer is yes, but I'm going to make it much more general. I'm going to propose that our mental and emotional states are linked to every organ system. Therefore, in Module 1 when we discussed boosting our immunological health for our respiratory system, that's going to strengthen people on many levels emotionally as well. You have to keep in mind that people who have weak immune systems at the respiratory level have a corresponding weakness of emotional immunity as well, and this is a very important idea to understand and I think all of us can understand it through our own personal experience. If you think back to when the last time was that you had a cold or a flu and you felt terrible and you tried to go out into the world and do stuff, you know that noise is amplified, you have very little patience, people irritate you more because you don't feel well, and that's primarily a respiratory immunological issue that then affects our mental and emotional state.

**[1:55:32]**

Now, the digestive system is exactly the same, and what's coming out more and more is that the condition of the gut flora plays a huge role in anxiety and depression, and of course it plays a huge role in hormonal balance as well. So balancing the digestive functions as I have just outlined, these simple things that are applicable to everybody of using bitters and aromatics and getting the digestive fire more stable and the peristalsis more regular, these things translate into emotional immunity and emotional stability as well. Then we come to the liver next week and we're going to find that the liver plays an even bigger role in our emotional wellbeing, and then we come to the brain and the nervous system. So what we're going to hear then is that every aspect of every organ system plays a very important role in our emotional and our mental stability and wellbeing and immunology as well. Now, obviously a lot of that can be correlated with hormonal swings because obviously the hormonal upset that you are describing, the view that you are sharing that it's an endocrine problem, that it's a hormonal problem. Well, this is a link to our diet and it is linked to our gut function and it is linked to liver function, it is linked to neurological function. So this is a more holistic way to understand it. So the answer is yes, but it's going to come in little segments, each module from different angles. And then when we come to specific things that are known toxins for the endocrine system, we're going to unpack it quite a bit more. By that time the herbal pharmacy will have expanded quite a bit so that everybody has a good idea of how to use the herbs in a general way for balancing these systems that can give some benefit.

So what I would suggest is that as we go through each module that you look at what can you take away that would be very important for balancing people's emotions. In this Module 1, one of the most important things is help people clean up their diet, because obviously, if people are on a bad diet, doing hormone replacement therapy is not the first line of treatment. Cleaning up their diet is the first line of treatment. So good question. Thank you. I appreciate it. I'll unpack it a little bit more. Lots and lots of questions on the webcast, but unfortunately, we are over time. So anyway, thank you very much to everybody all over the world. It is a very large group and obviously a very serious, sincere and dedicated group with very good questions. So I'll just say good night to everybody. Have a wonderful week. Work with these herbs slowly, carefully. Consult with me through the email box if you need some additional comments, but be patient. The email box is getting quite busy these days. With that, I will just turn it back to you Colleen and I'll say thank you also for your support with hosting the call. I'll also remind people about the breakout groups. Breakout groups are a very, very good resource where you can talk to each other, share good information, talk about what you learned, clarify any confusion you might have. Many of you have a lot of things to teach here as well. I don't consider myself the only teacher in this course. Lots and lots of people here are medical professionals. You can also share your knowledge and wisdom on the breakout groups. So with that, I'll say goodnight and turn it back to you, Colleen.

Colleen: Thank you so, so much David. Much gratitude from all of us here at The Shift Network and all of the participants listening now and into the future. Thank you.

David: My pleasure

**[1:59:38] End of Audio**

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