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## **Beta-glucans** in higher fungi and their health effects.

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### **Source**

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### **Abstract**

Together with chitin, the beta-glucans are components of mycetes' cell walls. A high level of biological efficiency has been found in beta-glucans, especially beta-1,3-D-glucans and beta-1,6-D-glucans isolated from some basidiomycetes. (Biological efficiency refers to the relative ability of beta-glucans to promote a desired response, for example to induce leukocyte activation and to produce inflammatory mediators.) These polysaccharides increase the number of Th1 lymphocytes, which help protect organisms against allergic reactions. A number of beta-glucans, for example pleuran from Oyster (*Pleurotus* spp.) mushrooms or lentinan from Shiitake (*Lentinus edodes*) mushrooms, have shown marked anticarcinogenic activity. In addition to having an immunity-stimulating effect, beta-glucans may participate in physiological processes related to the metabolism of fats in the human body. Their application results in a decrease in the total cholesterol content in blood and may also contribute to reductions in body weight.

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