

Larch Arabinogalactan: Clinical Relevance of a Novel Immune-Enhancing Polysaccharide

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Abstract

Larch arabinogalactan is composed of greater than 98-percent arabinogalactan, a highly branched polysaccharide consisting of a galactan backbone with side-chains of galactose and arabinose sugars. Larch arabinogalactan is an excellent source of dietary fiber, and has been approved as such by the FDA. It has been shown to increase the production of short-chain fatty acids, principally butyrate and propionate, and has been shown to decrease the generation and absorption of ammonia. Evidence also indicates human consumption of larch arabinogalactan has a significant effect on enhancing beneficial gut microflora, specifically increasing anaerobes such as Bifidobacteria and Lactobacillus. Larch arabinogalactan has several interesting properties which appear to make it an ideal adjunctive supplement to consider in cancer protocols. Experimental studies have indicated larch arabinogalactan can stimulate natural killer (NK) cell cytotoxicity, enhance other functional aspects of the immune system, and inhibit the metastasis of tumor cells to the liver. The immune-enhancing properties also suggest an array of clinical uses, both in preventive medicine, due to its ability to build a more responsive immune system, and in clinical medicine, as a therapeutic agent in conditions associated with lowered immune function, decreased NK activity, or chronic viral infection.

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