Introduction to Lion's Mane

A lot of what we cover on this show is long-term foundational support. Other things are like, take it right now and you'll feel it. Right now in natural medicine, a lot times it's more on the long term side than the short term.

But as you know, if you've tried certain products, things like back on track or even our ultimate vitality multi, lot people feel that the first time they take.

Well, Lion's Mane is so cool because it's both. It's really, really both, they've got excellent studies on quick, hey, I'm noticing a difference after 60 minutes and there are excellent study long term all the way out to 16 weeks showing increased improvement in cognitive scores.

Now, some of the side benefits I briefly mentioned earlier, gut and digestive support, that's what the Chinese used it for hundreds of years ago. And most people never think of lion's mane for that, but you should always think a medicinal mushrooms in that way because they are prebiotic by nature.

That fiber in the mushroom is pre biotic. It feeds the good guys in. The gut. And so you get that benefit. Then when you think about lion, think, about this, the gut brain connection.

If you're taking a mushroom that supports the brain and mental health and the nervous system. neuron development and all of that, and you're also taking in that same dose a mushroom that supports the gut microbiome, which supports to production of neurotransmitters and hormones and supports strengthening of the microbiomes itself, then you have got a really great win-win situation for the brain connection, for gut health, the brain health, the mental health.

All of that stuff. Welcome to Vitality Radio, The podcast that helps you make sense of natural supplements and thrive without pharma drugs. I'm Jared St.

Clair. Hello and welcome back to Vitality Radio. My name is Jared St. Clair.

What Lion's Mane Is and Where It Comes From

This is the next installment of our Magnificent Mushrooms series, and I have been looking forward to this one because, well, if you've listened to the show for any length of time, you already know that this is THE mushroom I get asked about more than any other.

It's the one people bring up when they call the store, when the messages online. when they corner me at events and it's usually some version of the same question, something like my brain just doesn't feel as sharp as it used to, or I'm in my 40s, I forget words mid-sentence, can't remember where my keys are, starting to freak me out a little bit.

Or I've got a family history, a cognitive decline like I do in my family. And I want to do something about it now proactively rather than waiting. I hear that constantly from my audience and this audience on this podcast specifically.

because well, I think it's one of the quote unquote scariest things when it comes to health is losing your cognitive ability, right? And you don't want to wait for a diagnosis to start paying attention to your brain.

You want it to be doing the work now in your 30s, 40s 50s and beyond before things start to potentially go south in that area. So today we're going to talk about lion's mane.

It's also known as the smart mushroom or the brain mushroom. This is the mushroom most closely associated with nerve health, memory, focus and mood. And unlike a lot of things in the natural health world, there is a genuinely interesting and growing body of research behind it.

We're going to cover where this mushroom comes from, what it's actually doing in the body, What the human research shows and doesn't show, and how to tell if you've got a good product from a mediocre one, which of course is one of the things I always try to help you with on Vitality Radio.

Let's get into it. So the mushroom itself, what is it? Visually, it's one of the strangest and I think coolest looking mushrooms out there. Instead of a cap and a stem like your typical mushroom you might see on, you know, Super Mario Brothers or whatever, Lion's Mane grows as this like cascading white mass of long dangly spines and it kind of looks like a lion's mane.

Shaggy white one, actually. And honestly, it's got a bit more of like a pom-pom made of icicles kind of a look to it. If you haven't seen it, you should look it up.

It's pretty cool. it grows on hardwood trees, oak and beech especially, and you'll find it across North America, Europe and Asia. So it actually got history of use in a wide range of cultures for hundreds, if not thousands of years.

It's what's called a saprophytic fungus, meaning it feeds on dead or decaying wood rather than living tissue. In Chinese herbal tradition, it's call Hao Tao Gu, which translates to something like monkey head mushroom.

I think I prefer lion's mane. Sounds better. In Japan, it goes by Yamabushitaki, which references the mountain dwelling Buddhist ascetics who traditionally wore a very similar looking shaggy garment, interestingly enough.

Like I say, that's got a long and interesting history. Now, here's what makes this mushroom scientifically interesting though. Most of what we talk about in this series comes down to beta-glucan, the polysaccharides that are found in pretty much all medicinal mushrooms.

Key Compounds and Brain Support

These are immune modulating fiber compounds that show up Across the kingdom, lion's mane has those two and they matter, but lion main also produces two other families of compounds that are fairly unique to this particular fungus.

And they're the reason this mushroom has its own dedicated research niche. Those are haricinones. and which are concentrate mostly in the fruiting body, the part that looks like the white icicle mass or the lion's mane itself, and renicenes which concentrate in mostly the mycelium, which is what's found underground.

It's kind of known as the root system of the mushroom, even though they aren't technically roots like from a tree or a plant. Both of those compound families have been studied for their ability to cross the blood-brain barrier and stimulate something called nerve growth factor or NGF.

N-G-F is a protein your body already produces naturally and its job is to support the growth, maintenance, and survival of neurons. Think of it as a signal that tells your nervous system keep building, keep maintaining, Keep this circuitry alive and functioning.

That single mechanism, the ability of a food-based compound to potentially support your body's own NGF production is what put Lion's Mane on the map scientifically.

And we'll talk about that a little bit more in the future of this show. The traditional record for Lion's Mane is interesting, especially in Chinese medicine where it was traditionally categorized as a tonic for the digestive system, interestingly enough.

What practitioners would describe as supporting spleen and stomach chi. It was used for general stomach discomfort and sluggish digestion long before anyone was talking about nerve growth factor from it.

It was also notably a delicacy. This is one of the only mushrooms in the entire series that we're producing on mushrooms that was a prize at the dinner table as it was in The Medicine Cabinet.

It shows up historically in Chinese imperial cuisine and is commonly described in culinary and herbal writings as having a texture and flavor reminiscent of a very mild crab or lobster, which is also exactly how I would describe it.

and we'll talk about that a little bit more in a minute as well. You'll also see it repeated often in modern write-ups that Buddhist monks use lion's mane specifically to support meditation, focus, and mental clarity, sometimes referred to as the monk's brain food.

I want to flag that because We see the claim constantly in the supplement world, you know, brain food, the tropics, all that kind of stuff. And most of the things that we talk about with nootropics are kind on what I would consider to be more of a cutting edge of science.

That's not bad. I'm thrilled that were discovering some of these newer things, but we have this.

Traditional Uses and Culinary Notes

ancient history, this kind of folklore of lion's mane being used before probably just about anything in the kind a quote unquote brain food category. And so I love Lion's Mane for its history of use.

If you listen to this show on a regular basis, you know, I'm all about the history and the anecdotal evidence, not just the scientific evidence. Although I like to weigh out both.

Now let's talk about this pulmonary medicinal thing just really quick. The modern research era for this mushroom really begins in the early 1990s when a Japanese chemist isolated the haricinone compound from the fruiting body and identified their concentration and their connection to nerve growth factor synthesis.

A few years later, arenasines were identified in mycelium with a similar and in some lab research even more potent NGF stimulating effect. That discovery is what took Lion's Mane out of the category of just another traditional digestive tonic and put it into the neuroscience research world.

Now, from a culinary standpoint versus medicinal standpoint, I mentioned the crab and lobster thing, and I want to expand on that for just a minute because this is genuinely one of only medicinal mushrooms where the culinary and medicinal benefits are both often used on a regular basis.

Frankly, I'll just tell you I'm not a big fan of mushrooms in culinary. They're just not my thing. A lot of people love them on their pizza or their salads or whatever else.

I don't love mushrooms that much. animal for lack of a better term. Very, very interesting. You can actually find it in farmers markets and specialty grocery stores, Asian markets for sure.

Often people will saute it and butter and actually eat it like a meat substitute, interestingly enough, or along with their meat. It also has almost zero bitterness unlike most medicinal fungi that has a little bit more of a punch to it.

So, interesting thing to consider that you can actually eat this one and probably enjoy it quite a lot where most medical mushrooms don't have the mild light taste that a typical culinary mushroom does.

Lion's mane very much is kind of in that side from a flavor standpoint. how do i personally use it because i don't use every one of these mushrooms that we're talking about in this series i'll use everyone of the products i talk about on the show i'd be using everything if that was the case i try to you know run the gamut on this stuff but i do use lion's mane and i've used lions me for a long long time it's one the easiest ones to stick with and mostly over my years

using it i use the powder We have powder in a variety of different brands.

I really like the powders. There are a few of them from Host Defense. And there's just the straight mushroom powder, which is great. We Have Lion's Mane Mushroom Powder and a couple other brands as well.

But then we also have the Brain and Body Mushroo powder if you like something that actually has flavor to it. It has some anti-inflammatory benefits as well, and some probiotic benefits.

There's a microbiome one aswell. So there's lot of options in the powder, but if you're just looking to throw something in your smoothie or your protein shake, your Rebuild, when you are mixing that up in morning and you don't want it to mess up the flavor, a scuba lion's mane just disappears in protein powder.

It disappears soups, it disappears pasta sauce. Its really easy to use that way and it's very economical that ways versus in a capsule form.

How Jared Uses Lion's Mane Products

and I still do that. I often will use Lion's mane. And I dump it in my smoothie on a pretty regular basis. But I also have fallen in love with a product that I co-developed with, a friend of mine, Jason from Feral Fungi.

This product I've got right here called Mindfuel. Now MindFuel was, this was for me. It was incredibly selfish. squeeze the little dropper and drop it straight into my mouth like I'm doing right now.

Now, normally I'll hold on to that in my mouse for about 30 seconds, but I am filming a show right know. But it's simple as that. Does it taste mild and light?

No, it doesn't. This is an alcohol extract for one thing, so you have that little bit of bite there. It also is a combination of lion's mane plus cordyceps, a frankly less tasty mushroom, suma, gothicola, and shilajit.

So it's a really complex formula of adaptogenic herbs, mineral-rich shilajit, plus these two mushrooms in a concentrated extract that is made in the spagyric tradition, which means that they concentrate all of these herbs down to the liquid extract.

They then burn the mass that's left over, the fibers mass is left. And they extracted the mineral salts from that mass. So you're getting the whole nutritional profile without the fiber basically.

and it hits pretty quickly. I do it, I did it just now, you know, to demonstrate, but I also do before. Most of my shows sometimes this is going to make you laugh.

I forget. Uh, it's right here on my desk, but I sometimes have my desks full of a lot of other things, Now, what is actually in each of the different forms of mushroom?

Like we're talking about the extract, we are talking the powder, talking of capsules. Well, it's actually pretty simple. There are what are called fruiting body capsuls, which is in lion's mane, is that the mane.

And then there's the mycelium capsul, like what host defense makes, and that's under the surface stuff, the Mycelia matrix. and there is debate. I'm not on one side of that debate, honestly.

I like them both. I think they're both very, very beneficial and useful. And I've tried both and I had success with both, so you kind of have to test them out and see what you think.

A lot of people listening like me to just say, Hey, this is the best, but I'm really not in a place where I feel like this. The best I do personally like.

This the, best the mind fuel liquid extract because of the other stuff that's in there and the way that it hits, I don't

love the flavor of it the. Best.

and. Love the powder, the brain and body from. Host Defense I absolutely love. I think it's a really, really cool formula, but it does have turmeric in it, ginger.

It's more of like a golden milk flavor, which some people love, some, people don't. So you have to kind of decide, I actually put that with coconut milk sometimes or regular dairy milk.

And I've also done it with water and it is good in any of those ways. Sometimes I'll add a little bit of monk fruit extract to it. But the easiest way is just pure powder, just dumped into a smoothie or a protein shake, and any of those work.

You can get extracts like the liquid, you can just get pure power, extract and concentrates in capsules. We have one that's a 4X and an 8X extract, so these are very concentrated capsule where you just take one per day from pure essence labs.

So lots of options, I'm not gonna steer you a specific way Take Lion's Mane, if you're worried about your brain and you worry about BDNF, brain-derived neurotrophic factor, that NGF that we talked about, nerve growth factor.

It's definitely worth a shot. it's not a super expensive supplement. It has a lot of prebiotic benefits because all mushrooms do.it has immune support benefits and then it has that bonus brain health benefit as well.

And then you just experiment and see which one you like the most. So I think I've gone through most of what I wanted to share with you. But I also want to say that you've heard me say this before.

If you're a regular listener, I'm not a big fan of gummies in this industry, but there is a lion's mane gummy that I really like. It's made by Host Defense.

it's a concentrated lion main and it tastes pretty dang good. They have some combination gummys too. You'll have to check them out. And they even have Grateful Dead artwork on them if you are into that kind of thing.

but just a straight lion's mane mushroom gummies are one that you may want to try if you like the idea of a gummy and instead of you know a liquid or a powder or whatever they do actually taste quite good.

I like them quite a bit. My favorite again is the Mindfuel because it's its own brain health stack but not everybody loves the liquid extract so you just kind of have to fiddle around with it.

Now, what does the research actually show that it really does incognitive function? Because that's really where the rubber hits the road. We have all this traditional use.

Human Research on Cognition and Mood

But let's talk about the human research. The most cited human trial goes back to a study out of Japan in 2008. Researchers gave adults between 50 and 80 years old, all of whom had been assessed with mild age-related cognitive decline, either lion's mane or a placebo.

you probably want a concentrated extract either in a capsule or a liquid like this the mind fuel or the powder because three grams is a lot that's going to be like six capsules worth so a Lot of people don't like just the regular capsule for that reason now there is good evidence that 1500 milligrams is a pretty effective dose too.

But the best study so far that we have is that that three gram dose, I do believe you can get similar results at a much lower milligram dose in an extract.

I certainly have experienced it with mine fuel, but let's talk about this thing, this placebo controlled study. Three grams a day split across three doses for 16 weeks.

Using a standard cognitive function scale, the group taking Lion's Mane showed meaningfully improved scores at the 8, 12, and 16 week marks compared to the placebo group.

Now the detail that I think is actually the most useful from this study is when they stopped taking it and followed up four weeks later, those improved scores had drifted back down.

That tells us that this is likely supportive, ongoing relationship, not a one-time fix. If you like Lion's Mane, it's working for you. You just keep taking Lion' Maine and you enjoy all of the wonderful benefits of it.

There's a follow-up study out of Japan in 2019 using a lower daily amount, 2.4 grams instead of three grams over 12 weeks. And again, found measurable improvements in cognitive function scores in the group taking the lion's mane.

So they found that it's even effective at a little bit lower dose. In a more recent study, 2023 in UK on healthy adults in their 20s and 30s, not older or cognitively impaired population, using 1.8 grams per day.

That's 1800 milligrams. What they found was interesting in two fronts. First, just 60 minutes after a single dose, participants performed noticeably faster on a standard attention and processing speed test compared to the placebo.

60 Minutes. That's a genuinely fast onset for something in the botanical and fungi world, most of which we oftentimes talk about in weeks, not days or hours.

Second, after 28 days of daily use, there was a trend towards reduced subjective stress, though that particular finding didn't quite reach the statistical significant bar, so it was trend that way, maybe over a longer time it may have gotten there.

And then there was also a study in Italy in 2019 that looked at adults dealing with overweight or obesity alongside diagnosed mood concerns, not cognitive, but mood concern.

After eight weeks of daily lion's mane, participants showed improvement in depression, anxiety, and sleep disturbance scores. So it is a tonic for the nervous system, period.

Really interesting. Now you've heard me throw the term BDNF around. Let's talk about BNDF in some detail here because I think it's something you really need to understand.

The original study we talked about did measure something called Pro-BD NF. BNDF is brain derived neurotrophic factor. If NGF is the signal that tells your nervous system to maintain and repair what's already there, BDNF, is more about building new connections.

What's often called neuroplasticity. Your brain's ability to adapt, learn and rewire itself in response to experience. It's the same molecule people are talking about when they say hard workout is good for your brain since exercise is one of the most well-documented ways to raise it.

Now I want to be precise here because it does matter what the Italian researchers actually measured was pro-BDNF, which is the precursor your body converts into active BDF not BNN itself.

That is a meaningful distinction because the body does have to still make that conversion. But BDNF and NGF are not the same molecule. They're part of the neurotrophic family, both involved in keeping your nervous system adaptable instead of static.

So between the cognitive research and the mood research, you're looking at a mushroom that shows up across multiple independent signals and many different trials.

showing that it supports the nervous system and neurotrophic factor in a significant way. And while we know that

increases pro-BDNF and we don't necessarily know it increases BD NF, I can tell you that based on the results of these studies, B D N F is almost definitely rising.

That is a big deal, especially if you feel kind of stuck in your life mentally, emotionally. We've got to keep that plasticity going. It's a big part of mindset work.

It's a big of meditation. I love Lion's Mane for all of these reasons. Now, I want to come back to the NGF just one more time because I wanna make sure that everything is fully covered here and you understand this clearly.

Laboratory and animal research going back that early 1990s discovery and continuing steadily ever since has shown that both Paracenones and iranocenes can stimulate the body's own synthesis of nerve growth factor.

NGF supports the health, maintenance, and connectivity of neurons throughout the entire nervous system. That's the proposed mechanism behind essentially everything that we've just discussed today.

Memory, attention, mood, all of those things. It's not that Lion's Mane is forcing a specific outcome, it is that it may be supporting what the body naturally wants to do anyway and helping it do more of it in supporting brain health and nerve health itself.

So here's why I think this all matters practically, not just academically. A lot of what we cover on this show is long-term foundational support. Other things are like take it right now and you'll feel it.

Right now in natural medicine, a lot times it's more on the long term side than the short term. But as you know, if you've tried Certain products, things like back on track or even our ultimate vitality multi.

A lot of people feel it the first time they take it. Well, lion's mane is so cool because it's both. It's really, really both they've got excellent studies on quick.

Hey, I'm noticing a difference after 60 minutes. and there are excellent studies long-term all the way out to 16 weeks showing increased improvement in cognitive scores.

Now, some of the side benefits I briefly mentioned earlier, gut and digestive support. That's what the Chinese used it for hundreds of years ago. And most people don't ever think of lion's mane for that, but you should always think a medicinal mushrooms in that way because they are prebiotic by nature.

That fiber in the mushroom is pre biotic. It feeds the good guys in. And so you get that benefit. and then when you think about lions mane, think this, the gut brain connection.

NGF, BDNF, and Nervous System Support

If you're taking a mushroom that supports the brain and mental health and the nervous system. neuron development and all of that, and you're also taking in that same dose a mushroom that supports the gut microbiome, which supports to production of neurotransmitters and hormones and supports strengthening of the microbiomes itself, then you have got a really great win-win situation for the brain connection, for gut health, brain health and mental health.

Now, Lion's Mane is not a stimulant. It's not sedating, which means it's flexible on timing. You can take it at night, you can it in the morning, and you take in in middle of the afternoon.

And remember, it actually helped to improve sleep scores, but I've never had anybody tell me that Lion' Maine made them sleep E. um in terms of duration i always recommend you give it a minimum of 30 days before you say this is working or it's not but again a lot of people notice a difference significantly faster than that and i certainly notice the difference when i take it right away with the mine fuel line really within 30 minutes or so of shooting the mind fuel down my gullet i am noticing things are just a little more dialed in, which is really good for the type of brain that I have got, uh, which is, uh, seeing squirrels on a regular basis.

Now, if you're wondering what you can stack it with, you CAN stack with other mushrooms. That's very common. The reason I've got cordyceps and mind fuel in this formula, along with SUMA and gota-cola is gotacola supports blood flow.

through the capillaries, just getting more blood and oxygen where it needs to be. So it's a traditional Chinese tonic for the brain as well. Summa, my favorite adaptogen for energy is in there because, well, I just absolutely love summa.

That's why it is the major player in my Ultimate Vitality Multi and you'll see it in others of my formulas as It's not that well known out there, it's a big herb for me.

And then cordyceps, which is oxygenating at the cellular level, so you've got more blood flowing, more oxygen in that blood, you got the lion's mane benefit for what it is doing for the nervous system, and then you also have got SUMA to help with the energy.

You can also stack that with magnesium. three and eight which you probably know I take on a regular basis along with magnesium glycinate which of course both also support the nerves and the neurons and all that kind of stuff.

A lot of people will also take it with things like Bacopa. We have a lot people here at Vitality Nutrition that take with our most popular brain formula which is NeuroQ from Life Seasons and NeurQ along the Mindfuel or NeuraQ with Lion's Mane is a really popular combination as well and another thing that a lot of people love in that i personally love and i take on a regular basis is methylene blue specifically focus not so much memory.

I'm not going to say people haven't noticed memory benefits with it, but a lot of people have noticed focus benefits. With methylene blue and I find taking methylenine blue on a daily basis of the magnesium daily and the lion's mane is a really good kind of one, two, three punch for me.

All right. So that I think does get us where we need to be when it comes to lion main. I don't think I left anything out, But of course, if you have questions, call us 801. 292-6662, that's 801-292 6662.

Gut-Brain Benefits and Stacking Ideas

If you want to try Lion's Mane and you're not sure where to start, I hope this show helped. I know I didn't dial in specifically. You know the ones I use, the powder, The Brain and Body Formula sometimes if I want something that has got a flavor to it.

Actually have that at home, Lion Mene powder and I have Mindfuel at Home and here at work. but the ones that I use the most are just the straight lines main powder and the mind fuel.

But that doesn't mean that's going to be what's best for you. So experiment with it. It's very, very safe. it's. Very, mild in terms, you know, nobody experiences side effects with lines, main that i've ever heard of.

And so you can play with that freely. You can adjust the dose, but give it a little bit of time, a month or two, three months, and really commit to it to see if it doing what you want it do.

I hope this series is helpful for ya. If you've had questions about all of these mushrooms, they get a little confusing. We're going to have cordyceps coming up, we're gonna have reishi coming, up we are going have one that everybody should know about that most people don't called shaga that I absolutely love coming as well.

Will keep doing these episodes about every month or two to give you more information on the magical world of medicinal mushrooms. And I'm not talking about magic mushrooms but you know what I am talking And if you have questions, call us 801-292-6662.

Visit us online, vitalitynutrition.com or at our South Ogden location or in Bountiful, our original store. We just celebrate 49 years in August of 2026. we're going to be 50 years old next August.

That's amazing. And I owe that to you people who pay attention to this show, pay our store and support us. Thank you so much for listening to me. My name is Jared St.

Clair and this has been Vitality Radio. Thanks for listening to the Vitality Radio Podcast. If this episode helped you, follow the show, share it with someone and explore trusted education and resources at vitalitynutrition.com.

See you next time.

Wrap-Up and Where to Learn More

Hello, everyone. I hope you enjoyed this week's episode of Vitality Radio. Just a reminder that this podcast is for educational purposes only. This podcast has not been evaluated by the FDA.

Thank you.