

# HEALTH

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## TCM

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### Coming up roseas

Rhodiola is a plant found at high altitudes in mountainous regions around the world. It's used in traditional Chinese medicine to stimulate the nervous system, enhancing work and exercise performance, eliminating fatigue and preventing altitude sickness.

The early Qing emperors, particularly Kangxi (1662-1722), ordered his army to take the herb to enhance their fighting abilities. Rhodiola has also traditionally been used to treat bleeding, lung problems, unusual vaginal discharges, wounds and burns.

There are more than 200 different species and about 20 are used in TCM. Rhodiola rosea has been studied for several decades. It's categorised as an adaptogen (a natural substance that can help the body rise to stressors) by Russian scientists, who say it has the ability to increase resistance against a variety of chemical, biological and physical stressors and to help the body recover homeostasis.

It may prevent biological changes by increasing intracellular oxygen diffusion and efficiency of oxygen use or by reducing hypoxia-induced oxidative damage. It's also used to improve or maintain endurance performance by athletes, by increasing the biological factors associated with oxygen uptake.

Giving the extract to rats can activate the synthesis or re-synthesis of adenosine triphosphate in mitochondria.

This acts as the main energy source for most cellular functions and is essential for locomotion and respiration.

Studies have shown that oxidative stress plays a key role in the pathogenesis of diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes mellitus, neurodegenerative diseases and rheumatoid arthritis.

One study examined its effect on the level of blood glucose, glutathione (GSH) and its related enzymes, and the activity of antioxidant enzymes such as catalase and superoxide dismutase (SOD) in type II diabetic mice.

The extract significantly lowered blood glucose levels and

increased that of GSH. It can also activate the enzymatic functions of catalase and SOD. So, it may help correct hyperglycemia (low blood sugar) and prevent diabetic complications.

A study published last year also found that extract of rhodiola rosea inhibits division of HL-60 leukaemia cells and reduces their survival.

It's one of the most promising of traditional herbal medicines.

*Before taking any medicine, see your TCM or medical practitioner*