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## A review: The potential of algae to increase immunity system

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### Abstract

The function of immune system is to protect the body from various pathogens such as viruses, bacteria, parasites. If the immune system is good, the protection from various pathogens that cause disease will be increasingly. However, the immune system can also be weakened. Factors that influence the work of the immune system are age, nutrition, exercise, hormones, and emotions. Eating nutritional food is one way to improve the immune system. Algae, which is commonly known as seaweed, is an aquatic commodity that has many benefits and potential to increase the immune system. Several studies have shown that algae can have potential to increase the immune system in humans. Types of algae that have been proven to have the potential to increase the immune system are *Spirulina platensis*, *Eucheuma cottonii*, *Laminaria* sp, *Gracilaria* sp, *Chlorella* sp and others. The other advantages of Algae are growing rapidly along the coastal areas and being a food resources as human consumption. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to review the potential of various algae as antiviral, anticancer and antibacterial in an effort to improve the immune system.

**Keywords:** Algae, immunity, antiviral, antibacterial, anticancer

### 1. Introduction

The immune system is an important system for human health. The function of the immune system is to protect the body from various pathogens, maintain the body's homeostasis, and get rid of toxic and allergenic substances. The mechanism of the immune system in protecting the body consists of innate and adaptive immunity. Innate immunity is non-specific. Innate immunity mechanism uses physical (skin, cilia, mucous membranes), chemical (lysozyme, lactoferrin, neuromimic acid, interferon, cytokines, chemokines), cells (macrophages, neutrophils, dendritic cells, and natural killer (NK) cells). Adaptive immunity is specific. The defense mechanisms of adaptive immunity are carried out by antibody and cellular (T lymphocytes). However, the immune system can also be weakened. One way to improve the immune system is to eat nutritious foods<sup>[1]</sup> such as algae. Algae contain various nutrients such as polysaccharides, proteins, and fatty acids<sup>[2]</sup>. Algae also are a source of several bioactive compounds such as vitamins, pigments, and secondary metabolites. Several studies showed that algae raw extracts had biological activities<sup>[3]</sup>, such as anticancer<sup>[4]</sup>, anti-microbial<sup>[5]</sup>, anti-inflammatory<sup>[6]</sup>, and immunomodulatory activities<sup>[7]</sup>. This review emphasizes on the potentiality of algae in food and how it can improve the immunity system of human.

### 2. Algae

Algae belong to the kingdom Protista with cells that have a nucleus. The characteristics of algae are the body of the talus, multicellular/ unicellular, free living and some can symbiosis with other organisms to form lycenes. Algae are photosynthetic organisms that can make their own food. Algae can be grouped into Chlorophyta (Green algae), Chrysophyta (golden algae), Phaeophyta (Brown algae), Rhodophyta (Red algae), Euglenophyta, Pyrrophyta (Fire algae), Bacillariophyta (diatoms)<sup>[8]</sup>.

There are a lot of algae species which can be consumed by human. *Ulva lactuca* is a green algae usually cooked as an ingredient in soup. *Saccharina japonica* is brown algae which can be used to make broth. *Pyropia yezoensis* can be used as nori to wrap rice in Japan. *Gracilaria* sp as ingredients for jelly<sup>[9]</sup>. *Spirulina platensis* and *Chlorella* sp are commonly used as a single cell protein supplement<sup>[10]</sup>.

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Several studies have shown that algae have the potentiality to increase the immune system in humans. Bioactive compounds in Algae can be used for increase immunity system. These contents have the potential to be antiviral, antibacterial, and anticancer [2].

## 2.1 Antiviral Agent

Viral disease has remained the leading causes death globally. Bird flu of Influenza A virus subtype (H5N1) had a fatality rate of 60% percent [11]. Global HIV statistics reports that at the end of 2018, 77 million people died from AIDS-related illnesses [12]. By the end of 2019, Covid 19 caused by the corona virus had spread in the city of Wuhan, Hubei, China. Since then, covid 19 has continued to spread to various countries. On 11 March 2020, it was declared a pandemic by WHO. Until May 26, 2020, the number of people infected with covid 19 worldwide was 5,406,282 cases and 343,562 people had died [13].

Virus infected host cell by some stages. Stages 1, the virus attaches to host cells (adhesion). Stages 2, viral nucleic acids enter the host cell (adsorption). Stages 3, replication of the genome virus (eclipse phase). Stages 4, maturity of the particle virus. Stages 5, virus particle release from host cell and induce host cell death. The virus induces host cell death by apoptosis or pyroptosis. Even though antiviral agents have discovered, the resistance and the side effects of drug might trigger the failure of antiviral therapy [14]. Therefore, the antiviral agents still needs to be examine.

Algae contains various ingredients that have the potential to become antiviral agents. The content in several types of algae that can act as antivirals are carrageenan, galactan, alginate, fucoidan, fucan, laminar, and calcium spirulan. Carrageenan blocked the binding of viruses (adhesion) into the host cell or the internalization of the virus into the host cells. Galactan potential as an antiviral agent because can blockage of the virus adhesion and replication into the host cell. Alginate can inhibit the inverse transcriptase in RNA viruses. Fucan Inhibition of cell adhesion and blockage of the reverse transcriptase. Laminaran can blockage of the reverse transcriptase activity. *Calcium spirulan* can inhibit the attachment, penetration, and replication of viruses in host cells [14].

*Spirulina* has been shown to have antiviral potential. A study on the potential of *Spirulina* sp cold water extract at a dose of 5,000 mg/kg, or 3,000 mg/kg/day for 14 successive days has been conducted. The results showed that *Spirulina* sp extract inhibited viral plaque formation in a broad range of influenza viruses and reduced yields in cells [15].

Not only *Spirulina*, some species of algae have also antiviral potential. *Gracilaria tenuistipitata* has been shown to inhibit HCV protein synthesis, RNA replication, and HCV infection [16]. *Laminaria japonica* contains fucoidan which has antiviral activity. Fucoidan with a concentration of 50 to 500 µg/ml can inhibit influenza A/H5N1 virus production within 24 hours of infection [17]. Fucoidan form *Fucus vesiculosus* can also suppress HBV replication [18].

## 2.2 Antibacterial Agent

Bacteria infection is responsible for illnesses in humans. Some diseases can affect death such as tuberculosis, and pneumonia. Various antibiotics have been used to fight bacterial infections. However, some microbes are resistant to ingredients. Therefore, natural ingredients that have antibacterial potential need to be found [19].

Algae are abundant biological resources which contain potential bioactive compounds as antibacterial. Bioactive compounds found in algae include alkaloids, flavonoids, steroids, tannins, phenols, saponins [20], and glycosides [21]. Research on the potentiality of antibacteria in seaweed have been widely carried out. The first genus is *Gracilaria*. There are many species from genus *Gracilaria*, which have antibacterial activities. *Gracilaria* sp extract with a concentration of 0.05% has been shown to inhibit the growth of *Escherichia coli*, *Staphylococcus aureus* [22]. *Gracilaria verrucosa* extracted with methanol: aquades (75:25) for 72 hours can inhibit the growth of *E. coli* and *Salmonella typhimurium* [23]. The isoamyl alcohol extract of *G. verrucosa*, *G. foliifera*, *G. corticata*, *G. crassa* and *G. edulis* have potential to inhibit growth of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Enterobacter aerogenes*, *S. typhi* and *S. aureus* [24]. The methanol extract of *G. corticata* can inhibit growth of *S. aureus*, *Bacillus subtilis*, *Streptococcus pneumonia*, *Enterococcus faecalis*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae* and *Proteus mirabilis* [25]. A research about the effect on bacterial growth of a crude sulfated polysaccharide (SP) from the red marine alga *G. ornata* has been conducted in 2012. The result showed that *G. ornata* can inhibit growth of *E. coli* [26].

The other genus of algae which have antibacterial activity is *Eucheuma*. *Eucheuma cottonii* is one of algae from genus *Eucheuma* that can produce secondary metabolites that act as antibacterial. *E. cottonii* can inhibit growth of *S. aureus*, *E. coli*, *V. cholera*, and *S. typhosa* [27]. The minimum inhibitory concentration of *E. cottonii* to *E. coli*, *S. aureus* and *V. cholera* were at 1% concentration while *S. typhosa* was at 5% concentration [27]. *E. spinosum* and *E. denticulatum* also have antibacterial activity. *E. spinosum* can inhibit growth of *S. aureus* [28] and *Porphyromonas gingivalis* [29]. *E. denticulatum* can inhibit growth of *S. aureus* and *S. pyogenes* [30].

*Ulva* also shows antibacterial activity. *Ulva rigida* can inhibit growth of *E. coli*, *Vibrio tapetis*, *Pseudomonas cepacia*, *P. aeruginosa*, *Aeromonas hydrophila*, *Salmonella typhimurium*, *S. aureus*, *E. faecalis* [31]. The n-butanolic extract *Ulva reticulata* has antibacterial activity against *S. typhi*, *S. aureus*, *E. coli*, *P. aeruginosa*, *V. cholerae*, *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, *B. cereus* and *Listeria monocytogenes*. The highest inhibition of *U. reticulata* was exhibited against *E. coli* and *B. cereus* [32]. The chloroform and ethyl acetate extract of *U. lactuca* can act as antibacterial against *E. faecalis*, *K. pneumoniae*, *S. aureus*, and *E. coli*. The ethyl acetate extract of *U. lactuca* was more effective as antibacterial than chloroform extract [33].

Antibacterial agents can act as bacteriocidal (kill bacteria), bacteriostatic (inhibit bacterial growth) or inhibit the germination of bacterial spores. Antibacterial kills or inhibits bacterial growth by inhibiting cell wall synthesis [34], changing the permeability of bacterial cells, diffusing into membranes and interacting with genetic material causing mutations [35].

## 2.3 Anticancer Agent

Cancer occurs because of abnormalities in the cell cycle regulation system so that cell division is not controlled. One of the causes of cancer is ROS (Reactive Oxygen Species). ROS (Reactive Oxygen Species) cause DNA mutation. DNA mutations can occur in tumor suppressor gene and make this gene inactivation [36].

Bioactive compounds in algae have potential as anticancer. They can act as anticancer by inducing apoptotic pathway of cancer cells [36], and inhibitory ROS (Reactive Oxygen

Species) activity and trigger antioxidant gene expression. Apoptotic pathways can be induced by caspase dependent or caspase independent pathways. Bioactive compounds can act as antioxidant which inhibit Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS) activity by exchanging one of their own electrons with the free radical molecules to stabilize them<sup>[37]</sup>.

There are a lot of research about algae as potential agent for anticancer. A research to about anticancer effect of methanol extracts from *E. cottonii*, red algae on cervix cancer Hela cells has been conducted. The concentration of 0.5, 0.7, 0.9 and 1.0 mg/mL treated for 24 hours. The result showed that methanol extracts from *E. cottonii* can inhibit the proliferation of HeLa cells and induced apoptosis to the HeLa cells<sup>[38]</sup>. The ethanol extract of *E. cottonii* also effective in inhibiting mammary tumor growth and more effective than tamoxifen and displayed little toxicity to the liver and kidneys<sup>[39]</sup>. *E. cottonii* can also inhibit proliferation of breast MCF-7 and colorectal HCT-116 cancer cells<sup>[40]</sup>.

Brown algae, *S. japonica* anticancer activities. *S. japonica* with dose of 20 and 30 µg/ml of the extract for 24 can induces apoptosis and cell cycle arrest in 267B1/K-ras human prostate cancer cells<sup>[41]</sup>. *S. japonica* can also inhibit growth and induced apoptosis nasopharyngeal carcinoma cell lines<sup>[42]</sup>, human hepatocellular carcinoma cells<sup>[43]</sup>.

Green algae, *U. lactuca* also has anticancer activity. *U. lactuca* contains polysaccharides, steroids, glycosides, flavonoids, and tannins that can act as anticancer<sup>[40]</sup>. The effects of polysaccharides, ulvan on *U. lactuca* on human breast cancer cell line (MCF-7) has been conducted. The result showed that ulvan polysaccharides at the level of initiative and promotion might have potential chemopreventive effects against breast carcinogenesis<sup>[44]</sup>. *U. lactuca* can also inhibit the growth of human leukemia cell lines, human throat cancer cells (hep2), breast human cancer (MCF7), and colostral (HT29) cancer cell lines<sup>[45]</sup>. The other green algae, *Chlorella vulgaris* also has anticancer activities against human breast cancer (MCF7) cell lines<sup>[46]</sup>, human liver cancer cell line (HepG2)<sup>[47]</sup>, murine melanoma B16F10 cell line<sup>[48]</sup>.

### 3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the development of new antiviral and antibacterial agents with diverse kinds of actions is widely developed. The examination for new agents focuses on not only synthetic compounds but also natural products such as animals, and plants. This review paper has a great deal of interest regarding the marine algae as potential antiviral and antibacterial agents to increase the immune system in human's body based on its components.

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