CODONOPSIS & ARTICHOKE FOR IBS
A placebo study of 116 people saw irritable bowel syndrome symptoms improve after taking the Chinese herb codonopsis (Codonopsis pilosula) for four months (15,600 mg capsules a day). While a commercially prepared herb product was effective, the best result was with a formula custom-designed for each individual. An alcohol extract had a greater effect than water extracts because it was richer in polysaccharides. Interestingly, immune suppression was previously seen in animals given codonopsis for a month while immunity was stimulated after two months. Other studies indicate it also reduces stomach acid and protects against stomach ulcers. Traditional Chinese medicine considers the herb a tonic that increases a person’s “chi” (vital force).

SALICYLATES
Aspirin contains the anti-inflammatory salicylic acid, from a family of compounds called salicylates. Those who take aspirin have a reduced risk of colorectal cancer. Researchers who did a study at the Dumfries and Galway Royal Infirmary in Scotland feel that salicylates in the diet may have the same beneficial effects as aspirin. They found that vegetarians have higher levels of salicylic acid in their blood (up to 2.47 mg per liter) when they tested Buddhist monks living in a monastery and diabetic patients who took 75 mg aspirin a day. This may be partly due to the salicylic acid found in fruits and vegetables. It is possible that natural salicylates also contribute to other benefits of a healthy diet.

FEVERFEW FIGHTS INFLAMMATION
Feverfew (Tanacetum parthenium) is used to reduce the inflammation that contributes to migraine headache and arthritis. Now Yale University researchers have discovered that the herb’s active ingredient (parthenolide) binds to and inhibits a protein (IKK-beta) that encourages inflammation. The pharmaceutical industry is already involved in developing drugs that target this protein and will probably use it as a guideline. Parthenolide also inhibited DNA from binding and increased the break down of breast cancer cells treated with the anti-cancer drug paclitaxel, suggesting anti-inflammatory herbs may help increase the sensitivity of cancer cells to chemotherapy drugs.

JAPANESE ASTHMA BLEND
In a study at the Tokyo University of Pharmacy, flavonoids and lignans made up the 11 compounds found in the urine after administration of a traditional Japanese herbal blend called Saiboku-To that is used to treat bronchial asthma. They are thought to be responsible for the herbs’ anti-asthmatic activity by means of suppressing the allergic reaction. Medicarpin derived from licorice (Glycyrrhiza glabra), magnolol and related substances from magnolia (Magnolia officinalis), and baicalein, wogonin, and oxysol A compounds from Chinese scullcap (Scutellaria baicalensis) inhibited lymphocyte blastogenesis. Saiboku-To, along with the compounds medicarpin, baicalein, magnolol, and baicalin, also inhibited inflammation in another study, although they proved weaker than cortisone drug treatments.

SMOKING WEED
Cannabinoids, the active compounds in marijuana (Cannabis sativa), were more effective anti-emetin than pharmaceutical drugs such as prochlorperazine in one study. Patients preferred it for the sedation and euphoria it produced and the few side effects, although it can cause high blood pressure, dizziness, depression, hallucinations, and paranoia.
The risks of smoking today’s “weed” may be increasing as marijuana becomes stronger. Today, it contains 6-8% of the psychoactive constituent THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) and sometimes up to 14% compared to 0.1%-0.4% in the 1960s. Modern marijuana produces four times the tar of a normal cigarette, so pot smokers may be developing cancer sooner than tobacco smokers. According to one unofficial survey, cancers of the lungs, larynx, mouth, or esophagus is appearing 10-13 years earlier with marijuana than tobacco and schizophrenic breakdown are years earlier.