

## GINGER



**Ginger** is taken generally to combat digestive problems and stomach related issues. As a medicinal herb, ginger has been cultivated for thousands of years in China and India.

It has been used for centuries as a spice in popular Asian dishes. Ginger is used commonly in the food industry as a food additive to ginger ale, candies, pastries etc.

The nutritional benefits of Ginger are widely accepted and most commonly associated with digestive health. In root form it has a strong, sweet scent. It contains protein, fat, carbohydrates, ash, calcium, phosphorus, iron, sodium, potassium, vitamin A, thiamine, riboflavin, niacin and ascorbic acid.

**Ginger Root** - is also a popular remedy for appetite loss and motion sickness. Ginger Root is also taken to loosen phlegm, relieve gas, and tighten the tissues. Asian medicine employs it as a treatment for asthma, shortness of breath, water retention, earache, diarrhea, nausea, and

vomiting; and homeopathic practitioners recommend it for sexual disorders as well.

Revered around the world for its pungent taste, ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) is a natural spice that is also widely prized for its medicinal properties. Since ancient times, traditional healers in a diverse array of cultures have used this plant primarily to help settle upset stomachs. Chinese herbalists have relied on ginger as a medicine and flavoring for more than 2,500 years. The early Greeks mixed it into breads (hence the first gingerbread), and North American colonists sipped nausea-quelling ginger beer, the precursor of modern ginger ale. Today, many cultures continue to rely on ginger for controlling nausea and also for reducing inflammation.

A botanical relative of marjoram and turmeric, the ginger plant is indigenous to southeast Asia and is now also extensively cultivated in Jamaica and other tropical areas. It's the plant's aromatic rhizome (or underground stem) that's used for culinary and medicinal purposes.

### Health Benefits

Ginger's effectiveness as a digestive aid is due largely to its active ingredients: gingerols and shogaols. These substances help to neutralize stomach acids, enhance the secretion of digestive juices (stimulating the appetite), and tone the muscles of the digestive tract. Research confirms the presence of anti-inflammatory properties in ginger as well.

Specifically, ginger may help to:

**Relieve nausea.** Standard anti-nausea medications often work through the central nervous system, causing drowsiness. Ginger isn't likely to cause this reaction, however, because it acts directly on the digestive tract. In studies of women undergoing major gynecological or exploratory (laparoscopic) surgery, those who took 1 gram of ginger before the procedure experienced significantly less postoperative reaction to anesthesia and surgery--namely, nausea and vomiting--than did those who were given a placebo. Ginger also may be useful in easing the nausea that frequently follows chemotherapy treatments.

**Combat motion sickness.** In a widely cited study of Danish naval cadets, those given 1 gram of powdered ginger daily had much fewer incidents of cold sweats and vomiting (classic symptoms of seasickness) than did those given a placebo. A number of other studies have demonstrated similar findings concerning ginger's calming effect on motion sickness.

**Reduce dizziness.** Ginger's anti-nausea action also helps dispel dizziness, particularly when the dizziness is aggravated by motion sickness. Older people, who can be unsteady on their feet, may particularly benefit from ginger's steady influence.

**Limit flatulence.** Because ginger soothes the digestive tract, it can be useful in relieving flatulence. Supplements or freshly grated ginger root mixed with diluted lime juice work well for this purpose.

**Control chronic pain.** Ginger helps indirectly to relieve chronic pain by reducing inflammation and, particularly when taken in standardized extract form, by lowering the body's level of natural pain-causing compounds called prostaglandins. Localized chronic pain may also respond well to ginger oil massages.

**Ease the pain of muscle aches and rheumatoid arthritis.** Ginger oil massaged into sore or aching muscles offers a measure of relief from muscle strain, in part because of the herb's anti-inflammatory properties. When taken in standardized extract form, ginger may additionally lower the level of the body's natural pain-causing compounds called prostaglandins. Rheumatoid arthritis symptoms may also respond to treatment with ginger, either in massage oil or standardized extract form. In a study of seven women with rheumatoid arthritis, reduced joint swelling and pain were reported following a daily regimen of up to 1 gram of powdered ginger or 5 to 50 grams of fresh ginger.

**Minimize symptoms of the common cold, allergies, and other respiratory conditions.** Ginger is a natural antihistamine and decongestant. It seems to provide a measure of relief from cold and allergy symptoms by dilating constricted bronchial tubes. It's often included in herbal decongestant blends that are designed for sinusitis and other respiratory complaints.

### **Ginger aid - the health benefits of ginger - Brief Article** **Better Homes & Gardens**, May, 2000 by David Feder

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There's real science behind the legends and myths that are associated with ginger.

Decades of research have revealed the wealth of health locked inside gingerroot. In addition to containing nutritional pluses such as vitamin A, vitamin C, and phytochemicals, this robust rhizome can soothe an upset tummy, kill harmful microbes, and help clear toxins from the blood. Best of all, you don't need to eat ginger by the pound to get the effects and benefits. Most studies have found that as little as a gram a day--less than a teaspoon of freshly grated ginger--gets fight to work helping to protect your system from a number of diseases.

An all-around good guy

The concentrated antioxidants in ginger guard against cancer before it starts by halting cell damage caused by rogue oxygen molecules. Other powerful compounds in ginger show the ability to stop existing tumors from reproducing, and even kill some pre- and early-stage cancer cells. Scientists have found other attributes to ginger, including evidence that ginger can:

- \* prevent blood clots from forming.
- \* reduce blood cholesterol.
- \* kill harmful microorganisms that contaminate food.
- \* protect against unwanted microbes that pass into the digestive system.
- \* soothe the symptoms associated with colds (and even be toxic to the types of viruses believed to cause the common cold).
- \* work topically as an antibacterial ointment, provide relief of arthritis pain and swelling, and inhibit development of precancerous skin growths.
- \* act as an effective antinausea remedy, especially for the nausea associated with motion sickness and pregnancy.

Feed a cold ... ginger

To use ginger to relieve cold symptoms or nausea, steep 2 tablespoons of thinly sliced fresh ginger (peeled, if desired) in a large mug of boiling water for several minutes. This herbal "tea" is also effective at alleviating some of those unwanted menopause symptoms, such as hot flashes and headaches.

Although many of the ginger studies relied on the whole root or extracts, some showed that dried ginger may be helpful too. Also, the juice from fresh gingerroot is effective. Use a clean garlic crusher to extract the juice. Then, add ginger juice to iced desserts, stir it into hot or cold beverages, or incorporate it in salad dressings. See the tips for more ideas. And don't forget to look for foods that already contain ginger, such as herbal "teas," crystallized ginger candies, and gingersnaps made with real ginger.

### Ginger On My Mind

Ginger boasts attributes above and beyond its versatile flavor and its natural compounds that promote physical health. Ginger has a pleasant aroma that could soothe the "savage beast" within. In a study on depression, the smell of fresh ginger was considered by subjects to be so pleasant that they ranked it as one of the most calming fragrances among the choices tested. In one study of migraine sufferers, ginger was reviewed for its qualities as an analgesic when eaten and as a provider of comfort via its aroma. In both aspects, gingerroot was able to provide at least some temporary relief from the debilitating headaches.

### Putting Ginger to Work

Adding small amounts of ginger to your regular diet may also add big amounts of protection. Here are eight ways a little bit of ginger can work its magic for you.

- \* Stir a couple teaspoons of grated fresh ginger into nut bread, muffin, or banana bread batter.

Include a half teaspoonful of dried ginger in rice pudding or bread pudding recipes.

- \* Heat a few pieces of candied ginger in a quarter-cup of maple syrup; pour over waffles or pancakes.

- \* Toss a spoon of minced ginger in the steamer basket when preparing fresh vegetables.

Cook rice with minced fresh ginger and raisins for a piquantly healthful pilaf.

Add finely chopped pieces of peeled gingerroot to fruit pie fillings.

- \* Grate some peeled fresh ginger over vanilla ice cream.

- \* Simmer matchsticks of fresh ginger with fruit for a snazzy compote.

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