

Ginger

Zingiber officinale Roscoe

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Ginger is commonly known as a spice, but it can also be used as an effective medicinal herb. Traditionally it has been used as remedy for different digestive problems, coughing, pain and general problems of metabolism.



According to Traditional Chinese Medicine ginger has strong effects on Stomach, Lungs and Spleen meridians. Fresh ginger has a warming quality and dried ginger has a more hot nature. Ginger has a strong acrid and spicy taste. It is said to disperse Wind-Cold, warm the Stomach and the Spleen, stop vomiting, treat stomach pains, drain Dampness and move Qi.

Frequent use of ginger promotes digestion, metabolism and circulation of Qi and Blood. It balances blood sugar levels and promotes weight control. Ginger is also said to enlighten the mind and spirit by bringing energy to the brain and sense organs. According to classical attributions it promotes memory and slows aging and prevents memory loss. Ginger is seen as a Yang tonic that is especially useful for male health. It can also treat women's problems like excessive leukorrhea, menstrual pain and morning sickness.

Traditionally ginger has been used to treat following acute diseases or symptoms.

Common cold

Common cold with symptoms of shivers, aversion to cold, low fever, sore throat, stuffed nose, muscle and joint pain, coughing and copious amount of white or clear mucus can be alleviated with hot ginger tea. For the treatment of common cold, using fresh ginger is seen as more effective than using dried ginger. Combining ginger with cinnamon cassia and Chinese mint or peppermint can produce more effective treatment results. Ginger is warming, it activates the immune response (wèiqì), opens the pores (còulǐ) and induces sweating. Cinnamon cassia helps the body to warm up, opens meridians and strengthens the Yang. Mint helps to treat the throat and it also eases breathing, clears stuffy nose and alleviates headache associated with flu.



Cinnamon bark is commonly used in Traditional Chinese Medicine to tonify yang.

Usage:

Eat a piece of raw, fresh ginger or boil water with ginger slices and cinnamon bark. After boiling add peppermint, wait for a minute and drink.

Cough

Ginger is an age proven medicine for coughing. It is especially effective for treating cough with phlegm. For dry cough mix ginger with licorice root.

Usage:

Eat pieces of fresh ginger or boil ginger in water to make tea. For children, add few drops of fresh ginger juice to a teaspoonful of honey.

Nausea

To treat nausea you can ingest fresh ginger juice. It can be even more effective taken together with honey. Ginger is traditionally used to treat morning sickness. It is also often used to protect the Stomach and digestion while using some strong medicinal herbs.

Usage:

Grate fresh ginger with microplane and combine the juice with honey and ingest it. Dried ginger can also be used.

Stomach pain and poor digestion

The most famous use for ginger has always been to treat stomach pains and poor digestion. Ginger promotes appetite, induces intestinal peristalsis easing constipation, promotes metabolism, harmonizes digestion and stops diarrhea. Ginger is also effective for fluid metabolism and it helps to remove swelling.

Usage:

Ginger can be used as fresh juice with water or boiled and enjoyed as tea. Tea made of dried ginger which is usually better for chronic problems caused by Yang deficiency.

Menstrual pain and general pain of joints and muscles

Ginger is effective for menstrual pain, especially Cold type dysmenorrhea, where warmth and pressure eases the pain. Ginger also reduces cramping during menstruation. Ginger tea can be used to ease general muscle and joint pain. It promotes circulation of blood and prevents inflammation and tissue damage.

Usage:

Used as tea. For menstrual pain, ginger can be combined with other herbs like cinnamon and Chinese angelica (*Angelica sinensis*), which is commonly sold under names of Dang Gui or Dong Quai.

For painful joints and muscles ginger can be used internally as tea or externally by applying ginger juice, minced/grate ginger or ginger tea on the painful area.

Usage

Ginger is commonly used as a spice in East Asia. In European people ginger is best known from Chinese, Thai and Indian cuisines. Fresh ginger can be purchased from most shops selling vegetables and dried ginger is a common spice. Ginger juice can be found from ethnic shops and from bigger supermarkets. It might be a good idea to learn to spice your food with ginger.

For easing chronic health problems and to tonify slow metabolism, ginger needs to be used frequently. For frequent use the most convenient way is to use ginger products. Nowadays a large number of ginger products are available because of the wide range of health benefits they have to offer. Many of these products also contain other health promoting herbs, like Chinese dates. The additional herbs are both for enhancing the effects and balancing the taste of the product.

In medical use the ginger is commonly used for problems related to metabolism, circulation of Qi and Blood, cough and the flu. For these conditions ginger is used internally as tea. In external use ginger stimulates the circulation of Blood and Qi thus alleviating pain and reducing inflammations. For swellings of joints and for muscle or joint



pains crushed ginger, ginger juice or ginger tea is applied locally to skin. External use is also possible for painful periods. Those with sensitive skin might consider diluting the ginger juice with warm water for the first treatment. For treatment of cold feet ginger can be also be added to foot baths.

Dosage

Effective dosage depends on the patient and the condition. The common dosage as medication is 3-10g of fresh ginger. In acute conditions the dosage is usually 10-20g. For nausea a spoonful of ginger juice is optimal. For dried ginger the dosage is usually 1-2g. For children the dosage is lower, usually only few drops of fresh ginger juice.

Scientific research

The wide use of ginger has warranted scientific research of its effects. Research results already seems to back up the following traditional claims.

- Reduces training related muscle damage and delayed onset of muscle soreness
- Reduces inflammation and tissue damage in tuberculosis
- Improves insulin sensitivity and reduces inflammation in diabetic patients
- Facilitates fat utilization
- Helps to fight *Helicobacter pylori*
- Can ease painful periods
- Increases lactation after pregnancy
- Alleviates nausea
- Eases morning sickness
- Improves sperm quality
- May prevent and support treatment of certain cancer types
- May help in acute chemotherapy-induced nausea

Warnings

Dried ginger has a more hot nature and depending on etiology, people with Stomach Heat or Yin deficiency (for example peptic ulcer) may experience side effects. It can also increase the effects of anticoagulant drugs like Warfarin/Marevan, so regular monitoring of degree of anticoagulation is recommended with frequent use of ginger.

For continuous use small quantities are recommended, as excessive use for prolonged periods can weaken the Qi. While treating short term problems like common cold, higher dosages can safely be taken.

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