

September 9th, 2009 9:45 AM Eastern

Ginger: Medicine Chest in a Root

by The Medicine Hunter



Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) is one of the most widely used and beloved of medicinal spices. Used since ancient times, ginger is insinuated deeply into the cookery of cultures around the world, from China to India to Jamaica to the Solomon Islands. Native to Southeast Asia and cultivated in virtually all tropical regions, ginger is a perennial herb with a branched rhizome. It is the rhizome, also referred to as the root, which is used for both culinary and medicinal purposes. The root is pungent, aromatic and yellow to brown in color.

Ginger's Chemical Soul



Ginger root contains essential oil and an oleoresin. It also contains numerous compounds including a variety of hydrocarbons, aldehydes and alcohols. Ginger contains at least a dozen antioxidants, plus a protein-digesting enzyme called zingibain, which appears to relieve arthritis pain by reducing inflammation. In experiments, the anti-inflammatory activity of ginger compared favorably with aspirin.

Ginger is rich in two groups of compounds known as the shaogals and gingerols. These compounds are powerfully antioxidant, thus helping to prevent cells from premature destruction due to exposure to environmental toxins and by-products of metabolism. Even more, these compounds are potent anti-inflammatory agents, and are proven to relieve inflammation throughout the body. Given that oxidation and inflammation are part and parcel of all chronic degenerative diseases, ginger can play a key role in disease risk reduction.

Traditional and Modern Uses



Centuries of folk use support ginger's use as a digestive, and the pungent root compares favorably with all known medications for motion sickness. Additionally, ginger helps to prevent seasickness more effectively than medicines for this condition. Its pungent flavor and aroma soothe a sore throat and help to relieve sinus congestion, especially when the root is pounded fresh and drunk as a tea. But the cold-fighting properties of ginger are more than aromatic. The root

contains at least a dozen virus fighters, including certain sesquiterpenes which fight rhinoviruses, the most common family of cold viruses. Ginger also inhibits platelet aggregation in blood vessels, thus helping to reduce the risk of atherosclerosis, hardening of the arteries. The compound gingerol shows promise in the fight against the fatiguing Epstein-Barr virus.

In folk medicine, ginger has been employed to relieve dyspepsia, flatulence, colic, vomiting and diarrhea. Preparations of the root have been used to stimulate appetite, and to relieve migraine headache and rheumatic and muscular disorders.

How to Benefit From Ginger Root

To make ginger tea: Pound or finely grate a piece of ginger root the size of an adult thumb, and place it in a tea infuser in a cup. Pour a cup of freshly boiled water, let steep for five minutes, strain and drink. Add honey if you like.

Ready made tea: I like the Traditional Medicinals Organic Ginger in tea bags. It's easy and convenient.

Chews: At any Asian grocery, pick up a bag of Ting Tings, which are a soft candy made in Indonesia, loaded with pungent ginger, especially good for the throat and motion sickness. Or look for Ginger Chews in any health food store.

And for an upset stomach, try real ginger ale, any natural brand that lists pure ginger on the label. Reed's Ginger Beer will quell an upset stomach quickly.

Hippocrates said "Let food be thy medicine." The simple food spice ginger, revered around the world, is also potent medicine indeed.

Chris Kilham is a medicine hunter who researches natural remedies all over the world, from the Amazon to Siberia. He teaches ethnobotany courses at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where he is Explorer In Residence. Chris advises herbal, cosmetic and pharmaceutical companies

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OUR CONTRIBUTORS



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Dr. Manny Alvarez is the Managing Editor of foxnewshealth.com. Since 1996, he has been the Chairman of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Reproductive Science at Hackensack University Medical Center in New Jersey. Additionally, Alvarez is Adjunct Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at New York University School of Medicine in New York City.



Dr. Ablow

Dr. Keith Ablow is a psychiatry correspondent for FOX News Channel and a New York Times bestselling author. His newest book, "Living the Truth: Transform Your Life through the Power of Insight and Honesty" has launched a new self-help movement. Check out Dr. Ablow's website at livingthetruth.com.



Deirdre Imus

Deirdre Imus is the Founder and President of The Deirdre Imus Environmental Center for Pediatric Oncology at Hackensack University Medical Center and Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Imus Cattle Ranch for Kids with Cancer. Deirdre is the author of four books, including three national bestsellers. She is a frequent speaker on green living and children's health issues, and is a contributor to FoxNewsHealth.com.



Tanya Zuckerbrot

Tanya Zuckerbrot, MS, RD is a nutritionist and the creator of "The F-Factor Diet", an innovative nutritional program she has used for more than ten years to provide hundreds of her clients with all the tools they need to achieve easy weight loss and maintenance, and improved health and well-being.



Dr. Coomer

Dr. Cynara Coomer is an assistant professor of surgery specializing in breast health and breast cancer surgery at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City. She is a FOX News Health contributor providing medical expertise on a variety of topics in cancer research with a focus on women's health, breast diseases and tips for healthy breasts at any age.



Dr. Fulbright

Dr. Yvonne K. Fulbright is a sex educator, relationship expert, columnist and founder of Sexuality Source Inc. She is the author of several books including, "Touch Me There! A Hands-On Guide to Your Orgasmic Hot Spots."



Dr. Siegel

Dr. Marc Siegel is an internist and associate professor of medicine at the NYU School of Medicine. He is a Fox News Medical Contributor and writes a health column for LA Times, where he examines TV and movies for medical accuracy. Dr. Siegel is the author of "False Alarm: the Truth About the Epidemic of Fear" and "Bird Flu: Everything You Need to Know About the Next Pandemic". Read more at www.doctorsiegel.com



Chris Kilham

Chris Kilham is a medicine hunter who researches natural remedies all over the world, from the Amazon to Siberia. He teaches ethnobotany courses at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where he is

Tags: chemical, chews, ginger, ginger ale, honey, modern uses, root, tea, traditional, upset stomach, water



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12 Responses to “Ginger: Medicine Chest in a Root”

Comment by Zoe

September 9th, 2009 at 12:02 pm

And... ginger is very, very yummy!

Comment by truthmarchingon

September 11th, 2009 at 4:27 pm

Thank you for this great article. VERY helpful. I appreciate the information not just regarding properties and uses, but on how to prepare the ginger for tea and how to find it otherwise. 5* !

Comment by Shellie

September 11th, 2009 at 6:21 pm

Thank you for writing this wonderful and informative blog on such an unlikely site! Your wife posted to Linked In and that is how I found out. It is courageous, for sure. And hopefully you will be well read and well received. If you ever want info on essential oils/ aromatherapy, let me know. Best!

Comment by John

September 14th, 2009 at 6:05 pm

I consume minced ginger with tomato juice in the morning for my mild arthritis. An Indian Dr. told me his mother had taken it daily for the same problem. It works. I also gave ginger to a fellow cruise passenger who did not take to typical sea sick pills very well. The ginger worked as well without the side effects.

Comment by Jonathan Waisman

September 14th, 2009 at 11:52 pm

Thanks for the info on ginger. What's your take on the pain relieving supplement Zyflamend? Apparently it's been researched by a major university. I'm wondering if it's worth the cost. Thanks.

Comment by Jodee

September 15th, 2009 at 11:42 am

Don't know if there's any proof for it, but I find ginger to be a great mood-lifter. My daughter and I rub fresh ginger a little on our wrists whenever we cook with it or make ginger tea. Then we just inhale the aroma and smile a lot. Silly! But true!

Comment by Lynda

September 15th, 2009 at 3:52 pm

“All good things are contained in ginger” and if I had to choose ONE HERB for that proverbial desert island...it would be ginger. Yet another use: apply sliced ginger to burns and they won't blister. Keep ginger in the freezer year round for this use....not to mention the handfuls I chop for stir-frys (digestion), adding lots to chai in the morning (burns out the morning blues), and the unbeatable ginger compress applied topically for deep healing. Thanks Chris, as ever, u r good herb messenger.

Comment by scorpy

September 15th, 2009 at 7:23 pm

Coeliac Disease-Ginger, help, best practices?

Explorer In Residence. Chris advises herbal, cosmetic and pharmaceutical companies and is a regular guest on radio and TV programs worldwide. His field research is largely sponsored by Naturex of Avignon, France. Read more at www.MedicineHunter.com.



Jennifer Cerbasi

Jennifer Cerbasi teaches at a public school for children on the autism spectrum in New Jersey. As a coordinator of Applied Behavioral Analysis programs in the home, she works with parents to create and implement behavioral plans for their children in an environment that fosters both academic and social growth. In addition to her work both in the classroom and at home, she is also a member of the National Association of Special Education Teachers and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

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Comment by James Baker

September 15th, 2009 at 9:17 pm

I use ginger tea to quell the cough of colds and prefer Gold Kili brand that comes in dried powder packets that are mixed into a cup of hot water. It makes a stronger tea than from steeped ginger root. It is pleasantly sweetened and tastes great. For those coughs that are accompanied by sore, dry throat, it instantly numbs the throat, stopping the cough. The effect tends to last long enough to get to sleep so it makes a great bedtime drink, but works anytime. Gold Kili is made in Singapore, though I'm sure there are other good powdered products. One finds them in oriental grocery stores or online.

Comment by Chris Kilham

September 16th, 2009 at 8:11 pm

Thanks for your great comments, folks. Yes, Zyflamend (made by New Chapter) is an excellent, multi-herbal anti-inflammatory.

On another note, i have no experience with coeliac disease, and so can't offer any good suggestions. That said, if you are near a Chinatown with some great herbalists around, you may get help fro one of them.

Your comments inspire me to keep this herbal mojo going. thank you all.

Viva la evolution!

happy trails, Chris

Comment by Medices

September 17th, 2009 at 2:23 pm

Tramadol is available in both injectable (intravenous and/or intramuscular) and oral preparations. It is usually marketed as the hydrochloride salt (tramadol hydrochloride). Dosages vary depending on the degree of pain experienced by the patient, and should be decided on the basis of need by the prescriber.

Comment by Jories

September 17th, 2009 at 2:25 pm

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Consumers should not use certain beef dog treats distributed by Merrick Pet Care because the pet food might be contaminated with salmonella, health authorities warned on Thursday.