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**Ginger Root and its Benefits**

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Ginger is a rhizome (underground stem), which has been cultivated for medicinal and culinary use for thousands of years. It was actually taxed by the Romans in 200 A.D., and Chinese medical literature mentions ginger dating back to 25-220 A.D. In Ayurvedic practice, ginger is used in over half of all prescriptions and is known as the “universal medicine”. The stem can be found in powdered form, dried, fresh, as a juice or oil. Ginger can aid in the relief of stomach, muscle or arthritic joint pain, and as well as stimulate circulation and improve digestion and liver function (Blumenthal, 2003)..

The chemicals in ginger, of which the key constituents include shogoals and gingerols, work to keep inflammation down and reduce nausea, as ginger is a carminative (a substance that reduces gas in the intestinal tract). Ginger has also been shown to have antiviral, antibacterial, antispasmodic, and immunostimulant activities (Holmes, 2007).

Nausea, such as that caused by cancer treatments or illness, often times can be soothed with ginger, as well as motion sickness, morning sickness, migraines, colic, upset stomach, gas, and diarrhea. Drinking ginger tea prior to and during menstruation can help to soothe cramping. Other muscle pains can be relieved with ginger in a compress applied directly to the affected area (see recipe below). Some have had positive outcomes from drinking ginger tea when experiencing upper respiratory issues (Duke, 2008).

Studies have shown that ginger can reduce inflammation due to the presence of COX-2 inhibitors. One such study involved people diagnosed with osteoarthritis, whereby the participants took 250 mg four times a day of ginger extract (Zintona EC) for three months to begin to feel the beneficial effects (Ginger, 2013). However, ginger’s effects can be felt much quicker for issues such as PMS, where relief can be found when taken 24-48 hours prior to the onset of menses.

Ginger is classified as a mild herb and is generally recognized as safe for use during pregnancy and breastfeeding. In high therapeutic amounts (such as 500mg, 4x/day of the dried herb) it is contraindicated for those with gallstones, ulcers of the digestive tract or inflamed skin issues. There is also the possibility that therapeutic amounts may increase absorption of any oral medications (Mills & Bone, 2005).

Ginger is also used to improve the taste of food and beverages, which is a great way to incorporate this powerful food. The root can be grated and added to stir fries, used to spice up a marinade, or added to boiling water to make tea (kick up the flavor by adding honey, stevia, cinnamon, or lemon). Authentic ginger ale is made with real ginger as opposed to a ginger ‘flavor’ of some common sodas, so remember to check the labels.

The cost of ginger is $5.00 per pound as of yesterday when shopping at the local grocery. The benefits of ginger are amazing per cost per pound and can be used as desired, where around an ounce a day proves effective. Consider switching from over the counter pain relievers to ginger for a more natural approach to promoting balance in the body.

**Ginger Compress**

Ginger compresses can be placed directly on aching, spasming muscles and joints. Slice raw ginger, approximately four ounces, into lean slices. Boil one-half gallon of water to a rolling boil then add the slices of ginger and let simmer for 20 minutes. Take a towel and dip it into the water, wring it out, and place on the area that is in pain. Cover with another towel to keep the heat from evaporating. Place the towel back in the ginger water after the towel has cooled off. Repeat one more time.

**Ginger Bath**

Take eight ounces of ginger and slice very thin. Place in boiling water and let simmer for 40 minutes. Add the simmered ginger to a hot bath and wait for the bath water to cool. This is soothing to joints and inflamed muscles.



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