

Everything Medicinal about Ginger – ‘Zingiber Officinale’

Ginger is native to India and China and takes its name from the Sanskrit word *stringvera*, which means “with a body like a horn”, as in antlers.

Ginger has been important in Chinese medicine for many centuries and is mentioned in the writings of Confucius. Rubbing cut ginger on the forehead or temples is said to cure a headache. It is also named in the Koran indicating it was known in Arab countries as far back as 650 A.D.

One of the earliest spices known in Western Europe and used since the ninth century, it became so popular that it was included in every table setting like salt and pepper. A common article of medieval and Renaissance trade. In English pubs and taverns in the nineteenth century small containers of ground ginger were available for customers to sprinkle into their beer – the origin of ginger ale.

Medicinal Properties : Ginger has long been ascribed aphrodisiac powers taken either internally or externally. It is mentioned in the Karma Sutra and in the Melanesian Islands of the South Pacific it is employed “to gain the affection of a woman’. However, in the Philippines it is chewed to expel evil spirits.

Ginger is a known diaphoretic – meaning it causes one to sweat. It was recorded that Henry VII instructed the mayor of London to use ginger’s diaphoretic qualities as a plague medicine.

Ginger is most commonly known for its effectiveness as a digestive aid by increasing the production of digestive fluids and saliva. Ginger helps relieve indigestion, gas pains, diarrhea and stomach cramping. It is also used to treat nausea related to both motion sickness, morning sickness and chemotherapy.

Ginger’s anti-inflammatory properties help relieve pain and reduce inflammation associated with arthritis, rheumatism and muscle spasms. It’s therapeutic properties effectively stimulate circulation of the blood, removing toxins from the body, cleansing the bowels and kidneys and nourishing the skin.

Other uses for Ginger Root include the treatment of asthma, bronchitis and other respiratory problems by loosening and expelling phlegm from the lungs. It may also be used to help break fevers by warming the body and increasing perspiration.

Ginger is on the FDA’s “generally recognized as safe” list although it does interact with some medications – including Warfarin. It is also contraindicated in people suffering from gallstones as the herb promotes the release of bile from the gallbladder.

There are a variety of uses suggested. A tea brewed from it is a folk remedy for colds. Ginger ale and ginger beer have been recommended as “stomach settlers” and ginger

water was commonly used to avoid heat cramps in the U.S. Historically it has also been used to treat inflammation and present day research suggests it may be useful for treating diabetes.

To keep ginger fresh freeze the whole rhizome and grate it frozen into recipes where called for. For easy use cut a large rhizome into slices and freeze on a cookie sheet then place into a Ziploc bag before returning to the freezer for storage. A hot bedtime drink can be made with two or three slices of the frozen ginger in a teacup of boiling water add a little honey for sweetener and pleasant dreams!