

Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*)



Here's the facts: Contrary to popular belief, ginger is actually not a root but an herb with rough, knotty rhizomes (underground stems). Native to Asia, its use as a culinary spice dates back at least 4,400 years. In China, ginger has been used more than 2500 years to treat headaches, nausea, upset stomachs, and diarrhea. It is now known that certain substances in ginger have strong anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidative, and anti-carcinogenic properties.

Good for what's "ale-ing" you!

In the 1850's, many English and Irish pubs provided fresh ginger on tables, much like salt and pepper today. Customers would often sprinkle ginger in their beer, creating the first "ginger ale"

Home remedies:

Morning Sickness: Human studies suggests that 1 gram (or 250 mg 4 times/day) daily of ginger may be safe and effective for pregnancy-associated nausea and vomiting when used for short periods (no longer than 4 days). Several studies have found that ginger is more effective than placebo in relieving nausea and vomiting associated with pregnancy.

Chemotherapy nausea: Evidence from a few studies suggests that ginger reduces the severity and duration of nausea (but not vomiting) during chemotherapy. More research is needed to confirm these results and establish safety.

Inflammation: Ginger has often been used to treat illnesses connected with inflammation, such as osteoarthritis, ulcerative colitis, and peptic ulcer disease.

Cancer: Ginger was found to reduce inflammation associated with prostate cancer cell growth and may possibly improve sensitivity to chemotherapy for people with prostate cancer.

A mouse study found that the antioxidant 6-gingerol, which gives ginger its flavor, decreased the number and size of tumors compared to mice who did not receive gingerol.

Ginger has been shown to cause apoptosis (programmed cell death) and autophagy (cell digesting themselves) in ovarian cancer cells.

Caution:

Ginger can cause blood-thinning and may be contraindicated if you are on blood thinners. Check with your doctor before using.

Side effects associated with ginger are rare, but if taken in excessive doses the herb may cause mild heartburn, diarrhea and irritation of the mouth. Some of the mild gastrointestinal side effects, such as belching, heartburn, or stomach upset, may be relieved by taking ginger supplements in capsules.

Preparation and Serving Suggestions:

- Ginger can be found fresh, pickled, dried, or in powdered form.
- Fresh ginger should be stored at room temperature
- Fresh ginger provides the freshest taste. It can be shredded, finely minced, sliced, or grated, and does not have to be peeled.
- Slice fresh ginger and enjoy on top of a bed of lettuce or boil to make a soothing tea.
- Add minced ginger to your stir-fry recipe or any other Asian-inspired dish.
- Use dried or powdered ginger to spice up any main dish or to make a yummy marinade.
- Add crystallized ginger to cookies, scones, cakes, or any other baked good.

Fresh is best, but . . .

1/8 teaspoon of ground ginger may be substituted for every tablespoon of fresh ginger

Cinnamint Green Tea

1 small bunch mint, about 15 sprigs	6 cups cold water
4 3-inch cinnamon sticks (optional)	4 bags green tea, regular or decaffeinated
1-2 thin slices fresh ginger	6 Tbsp frozen apple juice concentrate, or to taste

Place mint, cinnamon sticks, ginger in large saucepan. Add water, cover pot and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 3 minutes. Remove from heat. Add tea bags and steep 5 minutes. Remove tea bags, mint, ginger and cinnamon sticks, reserving sticks. Sweeten hot tea to taste with apple juice concentrate. Pour into mugs, add cinnamon sticks for garnish and serve, or chill for iced tea.

Per serving (makes 6 servings): 29 calories, 0g protein, 0g fat, 7g carbohydrate, 0g fiber

Helpful Resources:

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/ginger/>

University of Maryland Medical Center www.umm.edu/altmed/consherbs/gingerch.html#overview

Grotto, David. "101 Foods That Could Save Your Life." *Ginger*. New York: Bantam Dell, 2007. 147-

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