



Wonders of Cumin



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The Healer

We often forget the major significance of something we use on a regular basis. How many of us enjoy the sun because it is a rich source of Vitamin D? How many of us think that while drinking water we are drinking a healthy beverage? Same is the case with spices, especially the Indian spices that are used in everyday meals. Most people use spices to add flavor but few consider the medicinal benefits of each individual spice.

Cumin happens to be one of those spices. One of the best sources of natural

iron, this is generally the first ingredient that is used in Indian dishes and a spice that I personally use in most of my cooking. Cumin has an appetizing aroma with a sharp pungent and slightly sweet smell. Enough to make your nose twitch!



Cumin tea is a very healthy and refreshing beverage

Take one teaspoon of cumin seeds and one cup of water in a container. Heat the mixture till the water starts boiling. Reduce the heat, and allow simmering for about 2-3 minutes. Remove from heat, cover the container for ten minutes. Now, the cumin tea is ready for drinking. You can add a pinch of salt and a teaspoon of coriander leaf juice to enhance the taste. Drink cumin tea a couple of times a day to be benefitted by the medicinal qualities of cumin as mentioned

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History and Mythological Anecdotes

Cumin has been used in Indian cooking as far back as 5000 years ago. There is a reference to this spice being used as seasoning for soup and bread in the Bible. The planting of cumin is described and the knowledge of beneficial farming practices is ascribed as coming from God. The Bible also makes mention of this precious spice, whose medicinal properties were so revered, that the seed itself could be used for "payment of debts" or as a currency to pay "tithe" to the priests. During the time of the Pharaohs, cumin was not only used as a

food spice but also to mummify the deceased kings. Ancient Greeks used to keep a dish of cumin on the dinner table and this practice is continued in Morocco today. According to a rather humorous anecdote, ancient Greeks & Romans would drink large quantities of cumin oil to induce a pallid complexion that was regarded as the mark of a great scholar! Cumin was also thought to promote love & fidelity. It was believed that a happy life awaited the bride & groom who carried cumin seed throughout the wedding cere-

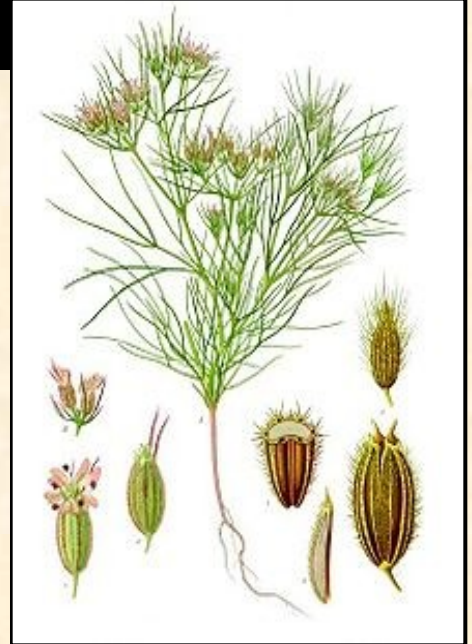
mony. People carried it to weddings & walked around with it in their pockets. Arabic traditions used cumin to fortify love, in which a paste of ground cumin, pepper & honey is thought to have aphrodisiac properties. Middle Ages superstition cited that cumin kept lovers and chickens from wandering. Married soldiers were sent off to battle with a fresh baked loaf of cumin bread. In ancient Rome, although a much prized spice, cumin became a symbol of frugality. Both Marcus Aurelius and Antoninus Pius, emperors, were given nicknames that included reference to cumin.



Introducing taste & Flavor to Bitter Medicines

Cumin, generally called Zeera in Indian cooking, has small seeds similar to fennel and anise seeds but resemble caraway seeds, being yellow in color, with an oblong shape. Around 9 ridges along its boat shaped length, these seeds are dried to retain only 10% of their moisture content. Scientifically called *Cuminum cyminum* the plant bearing cumin seeds, is an herbaceous annual plant that grows to a height of 30-50 cm. It has a small flower that is colored white or pink. It bears an oval fruit that is 4-5 mm long and its fruit contains a single seed. Able to adapt to the climate this plant can be grown anywhere up to the elevations of 1000 meters above the sea level.

Cumin has its place in the kitchen. A favorite herb of Middle Eastern and Mexican cuisine, it can be found in everything from chili to rice and its distinctive taste is appealing to many. It can help bring out the sweetness in any dish, tastes great in breads, and serves as a wonderful compliment to cheese. When cooking with cumin, one needs to use a light touch, however, as it has a powerful taste that can easily take over the flavor of any dish. Once one of the world's most popular spices, the use of cumin has actually declined from its peak in the Middle Ages where it was a staple in most herb gardens. However, today this small seed is showing a big resurgence because of its aromatic & medicinal qualities.



“Like most of the aromatic spices, cumin has oils that are rich in enzymes. Cumin contains anywhere from 2.5 to 4% essential oil. As per Ayurveda (the medicinal science of treatment with herbs) cumin is one of the nature's best overall tonic. Cumin is particularly known for its antiseptic, astringent, stimulant and diuretic properties.”

Medicine with no Side affects

Digestive: Cumin stimulates the appetite and a great herb for digestive disorders with some antiseptic properties. The seeds themselves are rich in iron and are thought to help stimulate the secretion of enzymes from the pancreas which can help absorb nutrients (vitamins & minerals) into the system. It has also been



shown to boost the power of the liver's ability to detoxify the hu-

man body. It can help with flatulence, indigestion, diarrhea, stomach pain, nausea, morning sickness, and atonic dyspepsia. The compound cuminaldehyde activates saliva secretion & Thymol activates pancreatic secretion of acids, bile and enzymes. The saliva helps primary digestion, whereas Thymol is responsible for complete digestion of the food in the stomach and the intestines. Cumin tea gives relief of a stomachache.

Kidney & Liver: It is also thought to be immune system. When combined with caraway for renal colic. Cumin is said to be a

a powerful kidney and liver herb and can help boost your immune system and black salt, cumin seeds provide an effective treatment for renal colic. Cumin is said to be a great tonic and can help the liver in its detoxifying process.

Metabolism: Cumin makes a great tonic for the body even if you don't have a specific ailment to cure. It is said to increase the heat in the body thus making metabolism more efficient. Cumin seeds also stimulate the production of enzymes which help the body to break down protein, fat, sugar and starch and help the liver to flush toxins from the body.

Piles: The main reason behind piles is constipation added with infections in the wound in the anal tract, which again, is caused by constipation. Cumin contains a good source of dietary fiber to help with such issues. Presence of essential oils comprising Cuminaldehyde & certain pyrazines give it carminative, stimulating, anti fungal and anti microbial properties. Thus Cumin acts as a natural laxative, helps healing up of infections or wounds in the digestive and excretory system and also speeds up digestion.

Common Cold: The Common Cold is a viral infection which affects our body frequently when our immune system is weak or worn down. The antiseptic properties of cumin can also help fight the flu by boosting your immune system. Cumin also prevents cough formation in the respiratory system as it is supposed to be hot and dries up the excess mucus. Cumin is rich in iron and has considerable amount of vitamin-C, which are essential for a good immunity and keeps infections away. Black cumin seeds, when combined with garlic, can further boost your immunity.

Respiratory Disorders, Asthma, Bronchitis etc.: Cumin has caffeine and other essential oils that act as a decongestant. Together this helps give relief to patients suffering from respiratory diseases or conditions such as asthma and bronchitis.

Memory: Cumin improves memory and overall mental function, and can speed recovery from amnesia.

Insomnia: This is a very peculiar property of cumin. It is a stimulant as well as a relaxant at the same time. This property cannot be attributed to a single component alone, just as causes of insomnia cannot be attributed to a single cause. But studies show that a proper intake of vitamins (particularly B-complexes) and a good digestion help induce a sound sleep. Cumin helps both of these. Some of the components of the essential oil are hypnotic in nature and have tranquilizing effects. In traditional Ayurvedic medicine, powder of cumin seeds are combined with a ripe banana and taken at bedtime to induce peaceful sleep.



Skin Disorders & Boils: Abundant in Vitamin-E, cumin is good for skin. It keeps the skin young and glowing. The essential oils present in cumin have disinfectant and anti fungal properties. This prevents any microbial and fungal infection from affecting the skin. Cumin can also be applied topically and is said to be a good salve for boils. Make a black cumin paste by grinding seeds with water and apply to the affected area. It can also be applied topically to help heal boils and other skin problems. Taken regularly

components such as Cuminaldehyde, Thymol, phosphorus etc. are good detoxicants which help in the regular removal of toxins from body, through the excretory system. Externally applied as a paste cumin helps to treat skin problems such as psoriasis, eczema and dry skin. It can help you get rid of burn marks and wrinkles too. If you are troubled with acne or boils try applying vinegar with ground cumin seeds. Cumin, applied topically as paste, may help fight against boils, rashes, pimples, acne and other skin problems.

Cancer: Recent studies have revealed that cumin seeds might also have anti-carcinogenic properties. In laboratory tests, this powerful little seed was shown to reduce the risk of stomach and liver tumors in animals. The detoxification and chemo-preventive properties accelerates secretion of anti-carcinogenic enzymes from the glands. It has antioxidants like Vitamin-C and Vitamin-A in it. It is particularly good for cancer of colon. Other anti-oxidants like Eugenol and limonene present in Cumin have strong anti-tumor properties. Recent research has revealed that cumin may slow the growth of breast and colon cancer cells. Black Cumin has proven beneficial for patients suffering from pancreatic cancer as it stops the multiplication of cancer cells. Sufficient intake of black cumin seeds can therefore prove useful for the prevention of such cancers

Cumin helps to strengthen nails and hair, making hair shiny and glossy. It may be effective in treating carpal tunnel syndrome. It has been used to help increase the breast size and cumin poultice is use to relieve swelling of the breast or the testicles. Cumin strengthens the functions of stomach and arrests any bleeding. Cumin oil, being an excellent bactericide, is useful in the treatment of cholera and diarrhea. The antiseptic properties of cumin oil prevent wounds and cuts from becoming septic. Moreover, it acts as a tonic nervous system, excretory system

and the circulatory system. It is very good in slowing down hair loss. Oil extract is

preventing bleeding gums. Inhaling cumin vapors can help to relieve sinusitis. Cumin

“It may be effective in treating carpal tunnel syndrome. It has been used to help increase the breast size and”

also used for massage, aroma therapy and scalp treatments to get rid of dandruff. Gargling with cumin water helps to keep the mouth fresh, heals mouth ulcers, and reduces foul smell. Massaging the gums with ground cumin seeds can also help in

is also an excellent blood sugar regulator. Research has shown that the natural chemicals in cumin reduce blood sugar levels and improve the action of insulin.

Young Girls, Pregnant and Lactating mothers: Cumin is very rich in iron (above 66 mg. in each 100 grams) which is more than 5 times the daily requirement of iron for an adult; thus very good for pregnancy or lactating mothers, women who are undergoing menses, along with growing children and adolescents, who are in greater need for iron than others.

Cumin has remarkable amount of calcium (above 900 mg per 100 grams) which accounts to over 90% of our daily requirement of calcium. Moreover, cumin is said to help ease and increase secretion of milk in lactating women due to presence of Thymol, which tends to increase secretions from glands, including milk which is a secretion from mammary glands. It is more beneficial if taken with honey. Cumin seeds, when taken along with milk and honey, prove extremely healthy for pregnant women. They help in the healthy development of fetus, facilitate easy child birth and also boost the quantity of breast milk secretion. Cumin also helps stimulate the menstrual cycle and when taken orally, black cumin is a natural contraceptive.



Small cumin big benefits