HERBS AT A GLANCE

NATIONAL CENTER FOR COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

Ginger

This fact sheet provides basic information about the herb ginger—uses, potential side effects, and resources for more information. Ginger is a tropical plant that has green-purple flowers and an aromatic underground stem (called a rhizome). It is commonly used for cooking and medicinal purposes.

Common Name—ginger

Latin Name—*Zingiber officinale*

What It Is Used For

- Ginger is used in Asian medicine to treat stomach aches, nausea, and diarrhea.
- Many digestive, antinausea, and cold and flu dietary supplements sold in the United States contain ginger extract as an ingredient.
- Ginger is used to alleviate postsurgery nausea as well as nausea caused by motion, chemotherapy, and pregnancy.
- Ginger has been used for rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, and joint and muscle pain.

How It Is Used

The underground stems of the ginger plant are used in cooking, baking, and for health purposes. Common forms of ginger include fresh or dried root, tablets, capsules, liquid extracts (tinctures), and teas.

What the Science Says

- Studies suggest that the short-term use of ginger can safely relieve pregnancy-related nausea and vomiting.
- Studies are mixed on whether ginger is effective for nausea caused by motion, chemotherapy, or surgery.
- It is unclear whether ginger is effective in treating rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, or joint and muscle pain.
- NCCAM-funded investigators are studying:
  - Whether ginger interacts with drugs, such as those used to suppress the immune system
  - Ginger's effect on reducing nausea in patients on chemotherapy
  - The general safety and effectiveness of ginger's use for health purposes, as well as its active components and effects on inflammation

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Side Effects and Cautions

- Few side effects are linked to ginger when it is taken in small doses.
- Side effects most often reported are gas, bloating, heartburn, and nausea. These effects are most often associated with powdered ginger.
- Tell your health care providers about any complementary and alternative practices you use. Give them a full picture of what you do to manage your health. This will help ensure coordinated and safe care.

Sources

Ginger. Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database Web site. Accessed at http://www.naturaldatabase.com on July 6, 2007.

Ginger (*Zingiber officinale* Roscoe). Natural Standard Database Web site. Accessed at http://www.naturalstandard.com on July 3, 2007.

Ginger root. In: Blumenthal M, Goldberg A, Brinckman J, eds. *Herbal Medicine Expanded Commission E Monographs*. Newton, MA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 2000:153-159.

Ginger *(Zingiber officinale)*. In: Coates P, Blackman M, Cragg G, et al., eds. *Encyclopedia of Dietary Supplements*. New York, NY: Marcel Dekker; 2005:241-248.

For More Information

Visit the NCCAM Web site at nccam.nih.gov and view:

- *What's in the Bottle? An Introduction to Dietary Supplements* at nccam.nih.gov/health/bottle/
- *Herbal Supplements: Consider Safety, Too* at nccam.nih.gov/health/supplement-safety/

NCCAM Clearinghouse

Toll-free in the U.S.: 1-888-644-6226
TTY (for deaf and hard-of-hearing callers): 1-866-464-3615
E-mail: info@nccam.nih.gov

CAM on PubMed

Web site: nccam.nih.gov/camonpubmed/

NIH Office of Dietary Supplements

Web site: www.ods.od.nih.gov

NIH National Library of Medicine's MedlinePlus

Ginger Listing: www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/patient-ginger.html

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