

Ginger - A Profile of an Amazing Rhizome



Name: Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*); Family: Zingiberaceae, a perennial; Common names: Ginger, Ginger root, Root Ginger; Range: Native to Asia, now widely cultivated in India, Africa, and throughout the Caribbean islands; Parts Used: Rhizome; Preparations: Tea and tinctures prepared from the freshly grated root, and encapsulation of the dried, powdered root.

History: Ginger is one of the most widely used and well-documented medicinal herbs known. While it is prominently featured in Traditional Thai and Chinese Medicine, ginger has been used extensively throughout most of the world for centuries. Different varieties of ginger are widely known in Thailand and other parts of Asia, but *zingiber officinale* is widespread in the Western hemisphere.

The pungent flavor and aroma of ginger is due to the presence of gingerols and shogaols, volatile oils that possess potent antibacterial and analgesic properties. A hot compress of freshly crushed ginger is very effective for treating muscle aches due to the presence of capsaicin. When taken internally, the primary actions of ginger is to increase salivation, enhance blood circulation, and stimulate digestion in the gastrointestinal tract. In fact, ginger is well known to improve nausea with equal or greater efficacy when compared to conventional medications, but without negative side effects. It is also safe to use during pregnancy to deter morning sickness. Ginger is also an excellent remedy for seasickness, as well as nausea associated with chemotherapy. Zingerone, another volatile oil found in the root, has been used successfully to treat a deadly form of diarrhea produced by *E. coli* that frequently occurs in infants in developing countries.

Other medicinal benefits of ginger include relieving headaches, including migraines. It also appears to relieve pain associated with arthritis. There is clinical evidence that indicates that regular consumption of ginger may lower serum cholesterol levels and possibly reduce the risk of heart disease. One study investigating the anti-cancer value of ginger showed that the volatile oils inhibit skin cancer and destroy ovarian cancer cells