

Ginger

BY DORIS RATHGEBER & SYLVIA HEINZEN

Ginger (Sheng Jiang) is the underground stem, or rhizome, of the plant “Zingiber Officinale.” It has been used as a medicine in Asian, Indian, and Arabic herbal traditions since ancient times.

In China, ginger has been used to aid digestion and treat stomach upset, diarrhea, and nausea for more than two thousand years. Ginger has also been used to help treat arthritis, colic, diarrhea, and heart conditions. In addition to these medicinal uses, ginger continues to be valued around the world as an important cooking spice and is believed to help treat the common cold, flu-like symptoms, headaches, and even painful menstrual periods. Native to Asia where its use as a culinary spice spans over four thousand years, ginger grows in fertile, moist, tropical soil.

Today, health care professionals commonly recommend using ginger to prevent and/or treat nausea and vomiting associated with motion sickness and pregnancy (morning sickness). It is often used as a digestive aid for mild stomach upset and as support in inflammatory conditions such as arthritis. It has also been used to treat heart disease and cancer.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine, ginger belongs to the group considered to be “hot food.” It warms the spleen and stomach and dispels cold and prevents yang from collapsing. It also warms the lungs and resolve phlegm-damp.

Be aware that there are a few contraindications of using ginger. Because it supports the heat, ginger should not be taken with any heat-cold symptoms such as fever, throat pain, or yellow and green phlegm.

Ginger is used in many different ways for baking and cooking, i.e. gingerbread and ginger cookies. Asia is not the only place that you can find ginger in daily recipes; it is used worldwide in soups, salads, salad dressings, stir fried vegetables, and meat/fish dishes – sometimes you can even find ginger ice cream. A more common use for ginger is ginger tea with honey in the winter, or ginger tea refreshed with lime or peppermint in the summer, although ginger will lose its “hot” property and be neutralized by adding these ingredients.

Last but not least, you can use fresh ginger or ginger powder as a foot soak. One tip for the winter time is to prepare a foot soak using a mixture of ginger and Bai Jiu (Chinese white alcoholic spirit). To prepare this solution, cook ginger slices (50g) for several minutes and add 50 ml of Bai Jiu (or any white spirit which contains more than 38% alcohol). Put the mixture into a basin of warm water and soak your feet for at least 15 minutes (make sure that the water covers your ankles). Afterwards, dry your feet and rest. This remedy helps to unblock energy channels (Qi), dispels pathogenic cold energy (Yin Qi), and reinforces hot energy (Yang Qi). ✍

Article provided by Body & Soul Medical Clinics. Visit the website: www.tcm-shanghai.com, or phone: Huangpu Clinic (5101-9262), Jing An Clinic (5101-9262) or Minhang Clinic (6461-6550).



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