

FENUGREEK: Healing Herb and Spice

It is human tendency to believe in man-made medicine more than the power of nature. But natural remedies go back thousands of years. Overlooked by us, we gulp down pills even though many healing herbs and spices are easily available in our kitchen.

Fenugreek (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*) is recognized by many cultures for its healing properties. Charred fenugreek seeds have been found at archeological sites dating back to 4,000 BC. It's mentioned in both Ayurveda and Traditional Chinese Medicine. Also called Greek Hay, fenugreek is an herb (leaves) as well as a spice (seeds), belonging to *Fabaceae* family. The seeds and leaves of this plant are considered helpful in curing many ailments.

Digestive Disorders

The leaves of fenugreek are useful in the treatment of indigestion and a slow functioning of the liver. Gastric disorders can be cured by consuming the leaves, and the seeds of fenugreek are used in the treatment of dysentery and diarrhea.

Fevers

Fenugreek tea is commonly known as *Hu Lu Ba* tea in Chinese tradition. The intake of fenugreek tea has been used to reduce fever. It is also highly valued as a cleansing agent, helping to flush out toxic materials from the body, as it warms and tonifies the kidneys.

Anemia

Fenugreek leaves are useful in the formation of blood in the body. Some say consuming the cooked leaves will guard against anemia during menstruation cycle and fenugreek seeds are also rich in iron.

Stomach Disorders

The inflammation of stomach and intestines makes anyone uncomfortable. Fenugreek tea helps in relaxing the digestive system. Intake of this tea will help to flush out all toxic substances from the body. And fenugreek seeds kill the bacteria that cause infections in the intestines.

Respiratory Infections

The initial stages of respiratory infections such as influenza, sinusitis, bronchitis, pneumonia, and catarrh (a disorder of inflammation of the mucous membranes) can be eased with the intake of fenugreek tea. This tea can be flavored by adding a few drops of lemon.



Diabetes

Fenugreek seeds may be effective in maintaining the sugar level in the blood stream. According to a 2009 study, an amino acid derived from fenugreek (*4-hydroxyisoleucine*) may help stimulate the secretion of insulin, reduce insulin resistance, and decrease blood sugar levels in diabetes patients. However, more studies are needed.

Bad Breath and Body Odor

The bad odor emitted from our body is due to growth of bacteria and other toxic material. The regular intake of fenugreek tea can combat these bacteria. Fenugreek seeds can even be beneficial for sore throat, mouth ulcers, swellings, and pimples.

Cuisine

Fenugreek is used in many cuisines to give amazing flavor to food, and it's common in curries and pickling spices. In India it's often mixed with yogurt or used to flavor rice or spinach. In Yemen it is the main condiment and an ingredient added to the national dish called *saltab*. In Egypt, fenugreek seeds are used to make a popular winter sweet tea and in various Middle Eastern countries it's used to flavor sweet cakes. In the U.S. fenugreek is widely used in lower-cost syrup products as a maple syrup flavoring.

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