

Black Pepper Details

Black pepper is a spice which is equally renowned for its spicy flavour, which can add a zing to any bland dish, as for its medicinal uses. Black pepper has been extensively used in Ayurvedic medicines and also forms a part of many home remedies in India. This spice is native to the southern-most state of India, Kerala, from where it is still exported to all parts of the world in bulk quantities.

Essentially, this spice grows as a small herbal plant which blooms into small white flowers. The flowers are dried giving rise to peppercorns. These peppercorns are ground into a fine powder which is easier to use for consumption and is called 'black pepper'. The spicy flavour of black pepper is derived from a chemical called piperine which is ingrained into the peppercorn itself. Since ancient times, black pepper has been used as a remedy for a myriad of diseases such as those relating to indigestion, weight loss, anaemia, heart diseases and dental diseases.

Black pepper contains a variety of vitamins and minerals. A rough break down of the nutrients in a 100 gms bowl of black pepper is given below:

Iron – 360%

Copper – 122%

Manganese – 244%

Vitamin K – 136%

Beta carotene – 156 mcg

Calcium – 44%

Apart from these main elements, black pepper also contains trace amounts of Vitamin A, Vitamin C, potassium, phosphorus, folic acid, niacin and dietary fibre.

Health Benefits of Black Pepper

As far as culinary use of black pepper is concerned, it is a very versatile spice and can be used in almost any dish. However, there are also a number of health benefits associated with black pepper. Below are some of the health benefits because of which black pepper became a popular ingredient in Ayurvedic and Chinese medicines.

1. Black Pepper Aids Digestion

Black pepper is often used as a remedy for digestion related problems like bloating, belching, constipation etc. The unique compounds present in black pepper together work towards enhancing production of hydrochloric acid in the stomach, making it easier for the stomach to break down the food. Ultimately, black pepper not only gives a person a good digestive system but also treats intestinal diseases by curbing the activity of micro bacteria.

2. Black Pepper Promotes Weight Loss

Black pepper has a hard outer covering which is very beneficial for breaking down the fat cells. The direct consequence of breaking down of fat cells is that they become easier to absorb into the blood stream. Ultimately, this means that fat does not get accumulated. On the other hand, such quick absorption of fat in the system also increases the body's metabolism.

3. Black Pepper Gives Relief from Congestion

Black pepper is also a popular remedial ingredient for loosening up the phlegm trapped in the throat and chest during a common cold or flu. Black pepper contains a natural irritant which can cause the phlegm to rise up so that you can throw it out of your system through a simple sneeze. Once the bacteria induced phlegm is out, it doesn't take too long for the cold to cure itself.

4. Black Pepper Prevents Free Radical Damage

Black pepper acts as a natural anti-oxidant for the body and prevents healthy cells from getting damaged due to action of bacteria or other cellular metabolisms. Ultimately, this property of black pepper goes a long way towards acting as a preventive measure for cancer, cardiovascular diseases as well as potential liver problems.

5. Black Pepper Induces Appetite

Black pepper is not just good for digestion, it is also a great food to stimulate appetite. The best way to take black pepper to avail this particular benefit is to mix about half a tea spoon of black pepper powder mixed with the same quantity of ground jiggery and wash it down with a cup of warm water about half an hour before your meal. Black pepper induces olfactory stimulation which gives you a good appetite.

6. Black Pepper Gives Relief in Arthritis

Like many other spices too, black pepper also contains anti-inflammatory properties. It can work towards reducing the internal inflammation of muscles in patients with arthritis and promote smooth flow of blood which is bound to reduce the pain as well as the swelling.

7. Black Pepper Maintains Dental Hygiene

Black pepper's anti-bacterial action is a great way to ensure dental hygiene. Apart from that, black pepper can also prevent other dental problems like bleeding gums, inflammation in the gums and even toothache. The best way to use black pepper for dental problems is to mix it with a pinch of salt and massage your gums lightly with the mixture using a soft brush or even your finger.

8. Black Pepper Acts as an Anti-Depressant

Black pepper is not just a great spice for flavour, it also directly effects the cognitive function of the brain which can induce a person to feel happier. The chemical piperine which adds the actual spicy flavour to black pepper is responsible for increasing the beta-endorphins in the brain which in turn result in a feeling of natural well-being.

9. Black Pepper Revitalizes the Skin

Black pepper acts as a natural scrub for the skin and can effectively exfoliate it by removing the dead skin cells. In fact, it is much better than any cosmetic scrub available in the market since it also contains anti-bacterial properties which leave the skin clean and radiant as well anti-inflammatory properties which take care of any pimple or blemish. Black pepper also stimulates flow of blood and can fight signs of ageing like wrinkles after prolonged consumption.

10. Black pepper for healthy hair

A paste of black pepper and curd applied to the hair has been a popular cure for getting rid of dandruff. Even otherwise, to get shiny, lustrous hair, all you have to do is mix a bit of black pepper to your regular hair oil or to 2-3 spoons of lemon juice and massage your scalp with the solution.