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Ginger to the Rescue!



By Sessa Nandyal

Shoshana Gordon

Some may only know of ginger, or *Zingiber officinale*, as a pungent and spicy flavor used in Asian cooking or the secret ingredient in grandma's dessert. Astonishingly, this root has been used to cure ailments of all kinds since the 16th century. Ginger has been shown to relieve nausea, intestinal problems, heart conditions, and the common cold. Scientists are interested in ginger because of the health value its unique chemistry offers.

Growing from the ground in broad stems with green leaves, ginger contains an arsenal of chemical compounds. Over the last 25 years, laboratories across the globe have repeatedly confirmed ginger's anti-inflammatory properties. Compounds found in ginger and other anti-inflammatory prevent the unwanted symptoms of

inflammation: vasodilation, pain, and fever. However, ginger is better than other anti-inflammatory drugs because it allows the beneficial components of our natural inflammatory response, namely the binding and admittance of white blood cells to tissue. Scientists believe that this could make ginger a superior option to pharmaceutical drugs with fewer side effects and more therapeutic qualities.

In addition to anti-inflammatory characteristics, ginger could play a key role in cancer treatment. Scientists of Yonsei University in South Korea found that another compound ginger contains, gingerol (a phenol), inhibits the proliferation of human endothelial cells. While testing melanoma-injected mice, they found that gingerol reduced lung metastases (the spread of cancer to or through the lungs) without a deterioration in overall health. Moreover, Taipei

Medical University researchers have seen that gingerol can induce cell death in leukemia cells grown *in vitro*. On the whole, these studies show that gingerol could be used to treat tumors and inhibit metastases in lung and other types of cancer.

After finding out about all of the great properties of ginger, should people eat as much ginger as they can stomach? More research needs to be done before concluding that ginger is a viable cancer treatment or headache medicine. Ginger may interfere with blood-thinning, diabetes, and blood pressure medications, so one should consult botanically-informed health care professionals before supplementing with ginger. Ginger should not be ingested by persons with heart conditions, bleeding disorders, or those with super taste buds. Aside from these rare side effects, ginger is proving to be something to root for. ●