The Mighty Powers of Mint

Peppermint is commonly used as a tasty way to relieve nausea and stomach pain due to an irritable bowel, intestinal cramps, or indigestion. However, it turns out that there is more to mint than previously thought.

Studies show that peppermint oil, found in most candy canes, appears to have additional benefits including germ-killing in addition to the ability to soothe digestive symptoms.

Researchers have long known that essential oils of horseradish, garlic, hyssop, basil, marjoram, oregano, winter savory, and three types of thyme show potent bacteria-busting abilities. And peppermint’s germ killing powers have also previously been researched. Yet, in a 2008 study published in British Medical Journal, scientists looked at the antimicrobial activity of two other mint family members -- Mentha villosa and Faassen’s catnip -- along with another non-mint herb, bluebeard.

These scientists also recommend peppermint oil as the first line of defense against irritable bowel syndrome, a condition characterized by abdominal pain and irregular bowels that affects between 5 to 20 percent of the population.

In addition to these uses, peppermint can also be used directly on the skin to reduce muscle pain and itchy skin. For relief of some types of headaches, apply peppermint oil onto the temples or scalp. As with all essential oils, it is best to dilute before putting it directly on your skin.

Add Lemon to Your Green Tea

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According to a recent study, ascorbic acid (vitamin C) plus sugar may enhance the absorption of the catechin compounds found in green tea.

Catechins are one of several types of compounds found in green tea, and studies suggest they may reduce triglycerides and promote weight loss. Trials also suggest other potential uses for green tea, including arthritis, asthma, genital warts, cancer and hypertension.

Researchers investigated the effects of combining these ingredients in animal and in vitro studies. The four groups observed for catechin absorption received 50 milligrams of green tea extract prepared alone, with sucrose, with ascorbic acid or with sucrose plus ascorbic acid. Two types of catechins, epigallocatechin (EGC) and epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), displayed significantly improved absorption in the group treated with both sucrose and ascorbic acid.

In vitro, there was a larger accumulation of catechins in cells treated with all three ingredients and a greater retention in cells treated with the ascorbic acid preparation.

While the results of this study show promise, additional evidence in humans are needed to confirm the safety and effectiveness of combining these ingredients.

For more information about green tea, please visit Natural Standard's Foods, Herbs, & Supplements database.

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**Benefits of a Dairy Rich Diet**

New evidence published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition suggests that a dairy-rich diet may help reduce inflammation and oxidative damage in overweight or obese adults.

The study included 10 obese adults and 10 overweight adults. The participants were randomly assigned to dairy-rich diet or a soy-rich diet for 28 days. After a 28-day washout period, the participants then switched groups.

The researchers measured markers for inflammation and oxidative stress on days 0, 7 and 28.

They found that the dairy-rich diet resulted in significant reductions in markers for oxidative stress and inflammation. The soy diet, however, did not have significant effects on these biomarkers. Overweight and obese patients responded similarly to the diets.

For more information about integrative therapies that have anti-inflammatory or antioxidant effects, please visit Natural Standard’s Comparative Effectiveness database.

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**Tomato, Cucumber & Mint Salad**

- 1/3 cup red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon white sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 large cucumbers, peeled, and cut into 1/2-inch slices
- 3 large tomatoes, seeded and chopped
- 2/3 cup chopped red onion
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh mint
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- salt and pepper to taste

In a large bowl, combine vinegar, sugar, and salt. Add cucumbers and marinate for 1 hour. Be sure to stir occasionally.

Gently toss tomatoes, onion, mint, and olive oil with the marinated cucumbers. Season to taste with salt and pepper. You can add other items, like carrots, to this salad as desired.

**“Let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food.”**

Hippocrates, 460 B.C.

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**Integrative Medicine Lecture Series**

**January 21, 2010**

**Managing Key Symptoms in Oncology: The Evidence for Integrative Medicine**

Debra L. Barton, Ph.D., RN, AOCN, FAAN, Associate Professor of Oncology, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, MN

Lectures take place at 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. in Hickey Auditorium (R11.1400).

Missed a lecture? Selected lectures from the IM Lecture Series are now available on DVD at The Learning Center.

For more information and scheduling updates about the lecture series, please visit the Complementary/Integrative Medicine Education Resources website at www.mdanderson.org/CIMER or call Felicia Stephens at 713-745-3206.