

The nutritional value of ginger

Ginger has been used to treat numerous illnesses. This includes arthritis, colds, hypertension, nausea, and migraines. Today, scientists are discovering more evidence of its medicinal properties.

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Every time Charlotte Kiluteka has been asked about her secret to weight loss, she has told friends that it is a combination of working out and religiously taking three cups of warm water.

"In the morning, every afternoon and before bed, I take a cup of warm or hot water with ginger. And to add a little flavour, I put some mint leaves and nothing more. No sugar," she explains.

Amanda Twebaze, a human nutritionist and dietetics graduate from Kyambogo University, describes ginger as a power food.

"It is called so because it contains a lot of antioxidants which help to reduce the risk of us getting chronic diseases such as cancer. Ginger also contains lots of various vitamins and minerals," she explains.

Some of the components of ginger include vitamin A, vitamin B-12, vitamin B-6, magnesium and a bit of calcium, all of which, Twebaze says,

heighten the body's immunity and promote longevity. Kiluteka says she zeroed down on ginger after researching about foods she needed to keep on her diet. "It has never occurred to me that I would get these many health benefits from ginger, especially at the time when I suffered with excessive weight gain," she adds.



Healthy prostate

According to *bensprostate.com*, an online portal, the ginger root is well known for its potassium and manganese content.

Potassium is essential for maintaining normal blood circulation, muscle and nerve function. Manganese helps absorb beneficial vitamins and minerals.

"This common ingredient has vitamins A, C and E, beta-carotene and zinc. These are strong antioxidants that protect your prostate from harmful free radicals. Free radicals speed up tissue aging and cancer development. Vitamin C and zinc stimulate the immune system, and protects the prostate from infection and inflammation," the site states.

Digestive system

Twebaze adds that ginger is also an anti-inflammatory, protects our digestive system, promotes muscle health and helps improve blood circulation.

REDUCES PAIN

Dietician Joe Leech describes ginger as the healthiest spice that originated from China and can be used fresh, dried, powdered, or as an oil or juice. In Uganda, it is added to some processed food. The Sydney-based dietician quotes a study in which consuming two grammes of ginger per day for 11 days, significantly reduced muscle pain in people performing elbow exercises. It is recommended for women particularly in reducing menstrual pain.

However, Amanda Twebaze, a nutritionist, cautions on usage. She explains, "Ginger should be taken in moderation as it is a strong flavoured root plant and might cause irritation to the digestive gut. I recommend using it in small quantities and not everyday."

It should be used alternatively with other kitchen spices and herbs. "You can also use it in tea, smoothies, juice, cakes, pastries, some soups and stews such as chicken stew, rice, barbecues and so many more," she adds.

Twebaze says some of the effects it can have include worsening ulcers because if taken in excess, it can irritate the gut for those with autoimmune digestive disorders. "It can also be used as a substitute for salt or sugar," she says.