

Cumin – Ayurveda’s Digestive Spice

An important part of a meal is not only the nutrition but the flavour, texture and aroma of the food. Spices are the essence of flavour in food. This is often stressed in Ayurveda. Certain spices and combinations are used for particular body constitutions taking into consideration the type and stage of disease as mentioned in Ayurveda.



One such spice is especially precious in Ayurvedic Medicine. Its Sanskrit name is *Jeeraka* which means “that which aids digestion”; it is also called as Jeera or White Cumin. The seeds have the best medicinal value and are collected from the *Cuminum cyminum* plant. It has a very light and dry quality with a pungent and bitter taste. There are two other varieties of Cumin namely Black cumin (*Nigella sativa*) which is often also called as *Kalonji* and Bitter Cumin (*Cuminum nigrum*).

White cumin is an important ingredient found in most Ayurvedic medicinal preparations which are used for conditions like bloating, vomiting, diarrhoea, dysentery, malabsorption syndrome, fever and skin diseases. Black cumin on the other hand is traditionally used for asthma, diabetes, hypertension, weight loss, fever, inflammation, bronchitis, dizziness, eczema, and gastrointestinal disturbances. While bitter cumin is a popular spice found in North Indian cooking, there is not much research conducted on it yet.

If there is one thing Jeera should be noted for is its ability to improve digestion by increasing the activity of digestive proteins which can help reduce symptoms of Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Apart from this it is also a rich source of iron, it and contains antioxidants that stabilize free radicals which are responsible for causing inflammation.

Classical Ayurvedic Texts have mentioned the following benefits:

- Improves digestion and taste
- Digests toxins
- Improves strength and immunity
- Redirects the flow of *vāta* downwards
- Alleviates intestinal spasms and vomiting
- Cleanses and detoxifies the Uterus. Hence it is widely used in post-partum care of the mother and is particularly useful for lactation.
- Improves intelligence
- Natural aphrodisiac
- Clears head of congestion and mucous
- Good for the eyes and improving visual capacity

Health Tips:

1. 1 teaspoonful of Jeera seeds kept overnight in the warm water can be chewed and eaten in the morning; the water should be warmed again in the morning. This is useful for menstrual difficulties and piles.
2. Cumin powder with black salt and warm water help relieve colic and dysmenorrhoea
3. Cumin powder mixed with coriander and fennel is excellent for aiding digestion and removing metabolic toxins.

Please consult an Ayurvedic Physician before taking any prescribed medication that has been discussed.