

Mint

Mint, from the greek 'mente' for mind has a long and proud history as a food and medicine and was utilized in ancient Greece, Rome, Egypt, China, Babylon and India. Despite the vastly differing cultures that have used it some common threads unite it as a medicine.

The most obvious of these is its well known action upon the digestive tract for which it was a favorite in Greece and Rome. All mints have an antispasmodic and calmative action upon the stomach and intestines, but with its high menthol content peppermint is perhaps the most effective. It is particularly effective in conditions that involve bloating and cramping, and along with chamomile can be drunk by breast feeding mothers to ease the pain of colic. The Romans utilized it to balance out their over indulgence in food and wine, and when drunk before bed, one or two cups of strong peppermint tea will ease the pain of the morning after due to its stimulatory action upon the liver. Another common use of mint, especially throughout the orient is as an antipyretic or heat reducing herb. In this capacity it may be used either internally or topically. Internally mint is used to help combat fever by being drunk cold in the later stages when the patient is literally burning up, or by being drunk hot in the early stages of a cold or flu to help induce perspiration and drive the toxins out. Other hot conditions that it may be useful in treating are gastric ulcers or reflux.

Externally mint can be made into a strong tea and used in a compress to help soothe sunburn and fever. A cool compress of mint tea is also useful for some forms of headache or migraine when applied with a face cloth or washer. Boils may also be drawn out by using a hot mint compress locally applied to them and changed regularly. A final area that mint has been traditionally used is in the treatment of stings and bites. Usually this is best done cold, and should be made in a strong brew first and then dabbed on, or held in place until the stinging subsides.

The last area that mint may be successfully used around the home is where its name was derived from, as it is also good to ease mental tension. To be used in this capacity the tea can be simply drunk hot or cold, a compress can be applied to the head, or boiling water may be poured upon fresh mint leaves and the steam inhaled underneath a bathroom towel. An even simpler method is to simply crush the leaves in your hands and take several long slow breaths in of their refreshing crisp aroma.

In order to enjoy not only the real flavor of fresh vegetables & herbs, but also their potent medicinal effects, it is of course imperative to ALWAYS buy organic!

The Barefoot Doctor