

Medicinal Properties of Black Pepper

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Black pepper (*Piper nigrum* L.) christened as the “King of Spices” is an important agricultural commodity of commerce in India. With its aromatic appeal, culinary uses and a great variety of medicinal advantages, Black pepper has gained a place of honor in any kitchen or spice rack, and even in the medicine cabinet. Being a native of Western Ghats, Black pepper forms an important ingredient of several indigenous medicines in India.



Black pepper contains a good amount of minerals like potassium, calcium, zinc, manganese, iron, and magnesium. Potassium is an important component of cell and body fluids that helps in controlling heart rate and blood pressure. Manganese is used by the body as a co-factor for the antioxidant enzyme, *superoxide dismutase*. Iron is essential for cellular respiration and blood cell production. They are also an excellent source of B-complex groups of vitamins such as Pyridoxine, riboflavin, thiamin and niacin in addition to vitamin A. They are also rich in flavonoid polyphenolic anti-oxidants like carotenes, cryptoxanthin, zea-xanthin and lycopene. These compounds help the body to remove harmful free radicals and help protect from cancers and diseases.

The nutritional composition of Black pepper as per USDA National Nutrient Database is given in Table 1.

Nutrient	Unit	Value Per 100 g	1 tsp, ground 2.3 g	1 tbsp, ground 6.9 g
Water	g	12.46	0.29	0.86
Energy	kcal	251	6	17
Protein	g	10.39	0.24	0.72
Total lipid (fat) ^a	g	3.26	0.07	0.22
Carbohydrate	g	63.95	1.47	4.41
Fiber, total dietary	g	25.3	0.6	1.7
Sugars	g	0.64	0.01	0.04
Minerals				
Calcium, Ca	mg	443	10	31
Iron, Fe	mg	9.71	0.22	0.67
Magnesium, Mg	mg	171	4	12
Phosphorus, P	mg	158	4	11
Potassium, K	mg	1329	31	92
Sodium, Na	mg	20	0	1
Zinc, Zn	mg	1.19	0.03	0.08
Vitamins				
Thiamin	mg	0.108	0.002	0.007
Riboflavin	mg	0.180	0.004	0.012
Niacin	mg	1.143	0.026	0.079
Vitamin B-6	mg	0.291	0.007	0.020
Vitamin A	IU	547	13	38

^a Total proximates do not equal 100% because piperine was subtracted from lipid value.

In Ayurvedic system of medicine, Black pepper is an important healing spice. Along with long pepper and ginger, it forms the herbal preparation called trikatu, an important ingredient in many ayurvedic formulations.

Simple preparations using Black pepper that comes handy to ward off common ailments are

Intestinal disorders: Mix some Black pepper with ginger juice and sip after every meal to treat indigestion. Superfine powder of pepper and long pepper in boiled water relieves chronic

dysentery. Black pepper, neem leaf and turmeric boiled in buttermilk is effective against ulcers in intestine and mouth.

Detoxifies the body and prevents gas- Being a carminative agent, Black pepper also helps get rid of gas from the body while preventing the formation of excessive gas. A glass of buttermilk mixed with one-quarter teaspoon each of Black pepper and cumin powder cure indigestion and heaviness in stomach.

Relieve nausea - Mix Black pepper and water in a glass, add some fresh lemon juice, mix and drink slowly.

To stop hiccups - Hold a small plate with Black pepper to your nose, inhale strongly a few times and the hiccups will cease.

A great way to lose weight- The daily intake of one glass of water mixed well with 1/4 teaspoon of ground Black pepper, 2 tablespoons of lemon juice and 1 tablespoons of honey helps to reduce weight. Black pepper is also good appetizer. In case of Anorexia or loss of hunger, a small quantity of Black pepper may be taken with some buttermilk for quick relief.

Excellent for skin- Black pepper also helps common skin problem like pimples and boils. Take some Black pepper powder and add some ghee to the same. Apply on the affected areas for relief. For relieving Urticaria skin allergy condition, you may take some Black pepper powder with a glass of warm water twice a day.

Good for respiratory health- Warm milk with 1 pinch of Black pepper powder and 1 pinch of Turmeric powder is a popular Ayurvedic remedy practiced in every Indian family for treating nasal congestion, chest congestion, cough, sore throat, headache and other symptoms associated with cold. Simply drink a glass of lukewarm water mixed with one-half tablespoon of Black pepper powder, two or three times a day to clear the respiratory system. Alternatively, steam inhalation from a pot of hot water mixed with some Black pepper and eucalyptus oil also gives relief.

As a home remedy for allergic and persistent cough, take two to three Black pepper corns, add a few cumin seeds and some salt. Keep this mixture in the mouth and feel the relief.

During the first stage of common cold, when you suffer from continuous watery discharge from the nose, Black pepper again comes to relief. In this condition, half a teaspoon of Black pepper powder needs to be boiled in a glass full of milk and taken at bedtime. In case of dry cough, take 2-3 freshly ground Black pepper, add to this some crystalline sugar and ghee in equal quantities and form a mixture. This may be taken two or three times a day for relief. Alternatively, Grind 5 or 6 seeds of Black pepper and mix with natural honey. Swallow a spoon of this mix daily until relief is achieved.

To reduce fever –In case of fever, one fourth tea spoon of the powder of the crushed spice may be taken along with some water to which sugar has been added. This can be taken three to four

times a day. Chewing of 7 or 8 leaves of basil with 3 or 4 grains of Black pepper also reduces fever. A decoction of Black pepper and ocimum leaves is also effective against fever.

To relieve asthma attacks - Black pepper is extremely beneficial in cases of asthma and whooping cough due to its expectorant and strong anti-inflammatory properties. Boil 8 to 10 grains of pepper, 2 clove buds and 10 to 15 basil leaves in water. Let the brew sit for about 15 minutes, strain it and add 2 spoons of honey. It can also be taken with milk. In the case of chronic Bronchitis, chewing Tulsi (Holy Basil) leaves along with some Black pepper to which honey added gives relief.

Is a great anti oxidant- Black pepper helps to fight the free radicals in the body thereby preventing life-threatening diseases like cancer, cardio-vascular diseases and liver problems. Concentrations of curcumin and piperine which can be obtained through diet or in the form of golden paste or milk are capable of eliminating breast cancer stem cells, without causing any damage to the normal breast cells.

Brain Tonic- Take some Brahmi leaves and shallow fry in desi ghee (clarified butter). To this add Black pepper and some sugar. This mixture can be taken regularly as it not only promotes the power of the brain but also beneficial for the eyes.

Good for eyes- In case of failing vision, black pepper also provides benefit for enhancing the eyesight. Regular intake of Pepper powder with some honey acts as a boon for better vision.

Tooth decay- Pepper powder may be used to massage the teeth and can provide relief from toothache and its regular massage helps to stay clean of the dental problems. A mixture of pepper, salt and coconut charcoal is effective against tooth and gum disorders. For treating toothache, mix ground Black pepper with clove oil. Smear the ointment on the afflicted area.

Keeps cholesterol low- Black pepper also reduces the chances of Atherosclerosis, a condition chiefly responsible for heart attacks and strokes, by getting rid of bad cholesterol. To keep cholesterol low, add 1/4 teaspoon of Black pepper to a glass of buttermilk. Mix in some finely cut onion and drink.

Malaria treatment- Mix the Black pepper powder with Holy Basil (Tulsi) and natural honey. Lick this mixture to get rid of malaria fever.

Cholera treatment- Prepare powder consisting of equal amount of Black pepper, Asafoetida (Hing) and double amount of Camphor (Kapur) to make small pills. Use these pills one by one after every half hour to cure Cholera.

Dandruff Treatment- For the people suffering from dandruff problems, add a teaspoonful of crushed pepper to a bowl of curd and apply it on your scalp, leaving it on for 30 minutes or so. Wash off with water without using shampoo. It can be done in the next day, as this will give the mixture ample time to work on dandruff. Remember not to overdo the pepper, as an excess of this ingredient will make the scalp burn, causing extreme discomfort.

Hair Revitalization- Mix a teaspoonful of ground Black pepper and lemon seeds and apply to scalp and hair. This will revitalize your hair, making it shiny, lustrous and soft. Leave the mixture on for 10 to 15 minutes and rinse off with cold water.

Snake bite- Black pepper is used as an antidote for snake bite and scorpion sting. An infusion of pepper from 20 berries in 180 ml of water should be taken thrice in a day. In traditional Chinese medicine, ten Black pepper seeds mixed in a juice of *Andrographis paniculata* is used as an antidote for snake bite.

Impotence- eating six black pepper berries with four almonds once daily with milk is a nerve tonic and acts as an aphrodisiac especially in young impotent persons.

Muscular pain- A table spoon of Black pepper powder fried in sesame oil until charred can be applied as an analgesic liniment for myalgia and rheumatic pain. Application of pepper powder in coconut oil dried in sun reduces pain due to rheumatism.

Despite Black pepper have many benefits it also has side effects if taken incorrectly. So, let's consume Black pepper wisely.

Side Effects of Black pepper are

1. Irritable bowel- Piperine in black pepper is hot to the bowel. Patients who have undergone abdominal surgery must be careful in consuming black pepper as it has the irritating effect on the bowel.
2. Burning sensation- Excess consumption of black pepper may cause burning sensation in stomach, skin and eyes.
3. Black pepper can cause sneezing and can increase the level of dryness especially for persons with dry skin
4. Black pepper can create difficulties during pregnancy and breastfeeding.
5. Increase body heat and not advisable to consume in summer which can even cause a bloody nose.
6. Patients taking cyclosporine A, digoxin, cholinergic, and cytochrome P450 should avoid the consumption of Black pepper.

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