

## Corn on the Cob and its medicinal uses

In 1940, Barbara McClintock received the Nobel Prize in Medicine for discovery of the first transposons in maize.

### \*Traditional herb

-Corn meal has been used by Native Americans for a wide range of ailments. It makes an effective poultice and has been used in Mayan, Incan, and American folk medicine to treat bruises, swellings, sores, boils, and similar conditions. Vogel in American Indian Medicine (1970) stated that "the Chickasaw Indians treated itching skin, followed by sores when scratched, by burning old corncobs and holding the affected part over the smoke."

### \*Urinary remedy

-Partly due to its significant potassium content, corn silk is a useful diuretic for almost all problems of the urinary system. Corn silk soothes and relaxes the lining of the urinary tubules and bladder, relieving irritation and improving urine flow and elimination. Corn silk is also helpful for frequent urination caused by irritation of the bladder and urethral walls, and for difficulty in passing urine such as in prostate disorders.

### \*Kidney stones

-Corn silk is thought to have a beneficial effect on the kidneys, reducing kidney stone formation and relieving some of the symptoms of existing stones.

### \*Cystitis

-Chronic cystitis can be relieved with corn silk and it is a useful adjunct to other treatments for acute cystitis.

### \*Chinese remedy

-In China, corn silk is used to treat fluid retention and jaundice.

### \*Other medical uses

-Temporomandibular joint syndrome or disorder TMJ (TMD).

### \*Medicinal Action and Uses

-Diuretic and mild stimulant. A good emollient (poultice) for ulcers, swellings, rheumatic pains. An infusion of the parched corn allays nausea and vomiting in many diseases. Cornmeal makes a palatable and nutritious gruel and is an excellent diet for convalescents.

Cancer; Cholagogue; Demulcent; Diuretic; Hypoglycaemic; Hypotensive; Lithontripic; Stimulant; Vasodilator; Warts.

A decoction of the leaves and roots is used in the treatment of strangury, dysuria and gravel.

The corn silks are cholagogue, demulcent, diuretic, lithontripic, mildly stimulant and vasodilator. They also act to reduce blood sugar levels and so are used in the treatment of diabetes mellitus as well as cystitis, gonorrhoea, gout etc. The silks are harvested before pollination occurs and are best used when fresh because they tend to lose their diuretic effect when stored and also become purgative.

A decoction of the cob is used in the treatment of nose bleeds and menorrhagia.

The seed is diuretic and a mild stimulant. It is a good emollient poultice for ulcers, swellings and rheumatic pains[4], and is widely used in the treatment of cancer, tumours and warts. It contains the cell-proliferant and wound-healing substance allantoin, which is widely used in herbal medicine (especially from the herb comfrey, *Symphytum officinale*) to speed the healing process.

The plant is said to have anticancer properties and is experimentally hypoglycaemic and hypotensive.

### \*China:

Diabetes, Diuretic, Dropsy, Hypertension, Gravel, Urogenital, Stomachic, Strangury.

### \*Elsewhere:

Analgesic, Antiseptic, Astringent, Diabetes, Diuretic, Liqueur, Lithontripic, Litholytic, Panacea, Pneumonia, Shampoo

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Stomachache, Tumor, Wart

**\*Haiti:**

Alexiteric, Brights  
Disease, Cardiac, Cystitis, Diuretic, Gout, Hepatitis, Inflammation, Intoxicant, Metritis, Nephritis, Renitis  
Rheumatism, Soap, Stone, Urogenital

**\*Trinidad:**

Amenorrhea, Analgesic, Antiseptic, Diuretic, Dysentery, Dysmenorrhea, Flu, Gum, Lithontriptic, Menorrhagia, Oliguria

**\*Turkey:**

Antidote (Bromine), Alterative, Anodyne, Demulcent, Diuretic, Litholytic, Stimulant, Stomachic

**\*U.S.:**

Cyanogenetic, Soap, Wart

**Health Benefits of Corn:**

Hot, fresh corn-on-the-cob is an almost essential part of any summertime party. Fortunately, it is also worthy part of any healthful menu. Our food ranking system qualified corn as a very good source of thiamin (vitamin B1), and a good source of many vitamins including pantothenic acid (vitamin B5), folate, niacin (vitamin B3) and vitamin C. Corn was also determined to be a good source of dietary fiber, and the minerals phosphorous and magnesium.

**\*A High-Fiber Food:**

Diets high in fiber-rich foods like corn - a cup provides 23% of the daily value for fiber - have been shown to lower high cholesterol levels, reduce the risk of colon cancer, and alleviate some of the uncomfortable symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome.

In addition to its beneficial effects on the digestive system and the heart, the fiber found in corn can help stabilize blood sugar levels. If you have insulin resistance, hypoglycemia or diabetes, corn may help you balance blood sugar levels while providing steady, slow-burning energy. Studies of high fiber diets and blood sugar levels have shown the dramatic benefits provided by high fiber foods. Researchers compared two groups of people with Type II diabetes who were fed different amounts of high fiber foods. One group ate the standard American Diabetic diet, which contained 24 grams of fiber/day, while the other group ate a diet containing 50 grams of fiber/day. Those who ate the diet higher in fiber had lower levels of both plasma glucose (blood sugar) and insulin (the hormone that helps blood sugar get into cells). The high fiber group also reduced their total cholesterol by nearly 7%, their triglyceride levels by 10.2% and their VLDL (Very Low Density Lipoprotein--the most dangerous form of cholesterol) levels by 12.5%.

**\*Corn for Cardiovascular Health:**

Corn's contribution to heart health lies not just in its fiber, but in the significant amounts of folate, niacin, and magnesium that corn supplies.

Folate, which you may know about as a B-vitamin needed to prevent birth defects, also helps to lower levels of homocysteine, an amino acid that is an intermediate product in an important metabolic process called the methylation cycle. Homocysteine can directly damage blood vessels, so elevated blood levels of this dangerous molecule are an independent risk factor for heart attack, stroke, or peripheral vascular disease, and are found in between 20-40% of patients with heart disease. It has been estimated that consumption of 100% of the daily value (DV) of folate would, by itself, reduce the number of heart attacks suffered by Americans each year by 10%. Folate-rich diets are also associated with a reduced risk of colon cancer.

A cup of corn supplies 19% of the DV for folate along with 18.9% of the DV for niacin, another B vitamin that may lessen cardiovascular disease risk by helping to lower high cholesterol. As for the magnesium in corn, magnesium is Nature's own calcium channel blocker. When there is enough magnesium around, veins and arteries breathe a sigh of relief and relax, which lessens resistance and

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improves the flow of blood, oxygen and nutrients throughout the body. Studies show that a deficiency of magnesium is not only associated with heart attack but that immediately following a heart attack, lack of sufficient magnesium promotes free radical injury to the heart. Due, in part, to its relaxant effects, the magnesium found in corn has also been shown to reduce the severity of conditions like asthma and migraine, lower high blood pressure, and reduce the risk of atherosclerosis and diabetic heart disease. A cup of corn provides 16.4% of the DV for magnesium.

**\*Lower Your Risk of Developing Lung Cancer:**

Consuming foods rich in beta-cryptoxanthin, an orange-red carotenoid found in highest amounts in corn, pumpkin, papaya, red bell peppers, tangerines, oranges and peaches, may significantly lower one's risk of developing lung cancer. A study published in the September 2003 issue of *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention* reviewed dietary and lifestyle data collected from 63,257 adults in Shanghai, China, who were followed for 8 years, during which time 482 cases of lung cancer were diagnosed. Those eating the most cryptoxanthin-rich foods showed a 27% reduction in lung cancer risk. When current smokers were evaluated, those who were also in the group consuming the most cryptoxanthin-rich foods were found to have a 37% lower risk of lung cancer compared to smokers who ate the least of these health-protective foods. (December 3, 2003)

**\*Maintain Your Memory with Thiamin (Vitamin B1):**

Corn is an excellent source of thiamin, providing one-third (32.7%) of the daily value for this nutrient in a single cup. Thiamin is an integral participant in enzymatic reactions central to energy production and is also critical for brain cell/cognitive function. This is because thiamin is needed for the synthesis of acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter essential for memory, whose lack has been found to be a significant contributing factor in age-related impairment in mental function (senility) and Alzheimer's disease. In fact, Alzheimer's disease is clinically characterized by a decrease in acetylcholine levels. Don't forget to make corn a staple in your healthy diet.

**\*Support for Energy Production, Even Under Stress:**

In addition to its thiamin, corn is a good source of pantothenic acid as well as its aforementioned niacin-vitamin B3. Both pantothenic acid and niacin are necessary for carbohydrate, protein and lipid metabolism. Pantothenic acid is an especially valuable B-vitamin when you're under stress since it supports the function of the adrenal glands. A cup of corn supplies 28.8% of the daily value for pantothenic acid along with 18.9% of the daily value for niacin.

**\*How it works in the body:**

Corn silk works mainly in the urinary tract. The saponins largely act as an anti-inflammatory in the body and the allantoin as a healing agent, with the mucilage giving a demulcent or soothing effect to irritated tissues. The potassium balances out the diuretic effect of the herb, which is used in conditions of water retention. Their combined action is useful for a number of urinary tract conditions, such as cystitis and prostatitis. Vitamin K is a fat soluble vitamin that is essential for blood clotting within the body.

**\*Research:**

Bile production - Corn silk is thought to stimulate production of bile, improving its flow from the liver through the bile ducts.

Circulatory remedy - Research in China indicates that corn silk lowers blood pressure and reduces blood-clotting time.

This is purely an informative article. As with all remedies, they should be discussed with a qualified Herbalist/