

## Patient Fact Sheet

# GINGER

**GINGER** (*Zingiber officinale*) is a tropical plant with thick, knobby roots. Ginger root is used both as a spice and as a medicine in many cultures. It is used in Traditional Chinese Medicine and in Ayurveda, the traditional medicine of India. It is available fresh, dried, in capsules, and as an alcohol tincture.

### WHAT IS IT USED FOR?

- ◆ Ginger is mostly used to prevent and treat nausea (upset stomach) from many causes, including pregnancy, motion sickness, anesthesia, and cancer chemotherapy.
- ◆ It is sometimes recommended for colds.
- ◆ It is sometimes used for headaches and arthritis.
- ◆ In Ayurvedic Medicine, it is used for people with heart problems, to try to prevent blood clots and lower cholesterol.
- ◆ It is used to make people who have chills from fever feel warmer.

### WHAT HAVE STUDIES SHOWN?

- ◆ Many studies have been done in people who have nausea from **pregnancy (morning sickness)**, **anesthesia**, **motion sickness**, and **chemotherapy** (cancer medicines). Almost all of these studies show that ginger can prevent or decrease nausea.
- ◆ Two small studies in people with **arthritis** showed that ginger may decrease pain and swelling. More studies are needed.
- ◆ There are no studies of ginger's use for **headaches** or **colds**.
- ◆ Studies in animals show that ginger may have some effects on the heart and may lower **cholesterol** levels, but there are no studies in humans.

### WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS?

- ◆ Allergic reactions to ginger are rare but possible.
- ◆ Large amounts of ginger may cause stomach upset in people who are not used to spicy foods.

No long-term problems have been found from taking ginger.

(continued)

## **IS IT SAFE FOR CHILDREN AND PREGNANT WOMEN?**

Because ginger is used as a food and there have not been any reported problems, it is considered safe for children and women who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

## **WILL IT INTERFERE WITH MY OTHER MEDICATIONS OR MY MEDICAL CONDITION?**

- ◆ Some herbalists think that people with heart problems, gallstones, liver problems, diabetes, or hypoglycemia should not take ginger. However, there have not been any problems reported when people with these problems took ginger as medicine or as a food.
- ◆ Tinctures are not recommended for people with severe liver disease because they contain alcohol.

## **WHAT ARE TYPICAL DOSAGES?**

Typical doses for adults are:

- ◆ 250 mg of dried ginger four times per day by mouth, OR
- ◆ 1 teaspoon of fresh ginger root boiled in 1 to 2 cups of water, sweetened as needed and taken as tea up to four times per day, OR
- ◆ 1.5 to 3.0 mL of ginger tincture by mouth up to four times per day

Doses for children are unknown.

Follow your health care provider's instructions.

## **WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?**

- ◆ Always tell your doctor or nurse practitioner if you are taking any herbal product, and before starting any new one. Your health care provider needs to know everything you are taking to help you make decisions about your health care. Herbs can cause problems with other herbs, dietary supplements, or medications.
- ◆ Herbal products may be contaminated with chemicals or other species of plants.