Ginger: The Other Anti-Inflammation Spice

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When anyone is diagnosed with a longer-term illness, their medical providers and friends will tell them to take turmeric. Turmeric is touted as THE anti-inflammatory spice...But what if you can't tolerate it? Well then, you should consider the other anti-inflammatory spice: GINGER.

Both turmeric and ginger are rhizomes and come from the same plant family. When you compare 100g (approximately 3/8c) of ground turmeric and ginger in the USDA Nutrient database, their nutritional profiles look similar, except that turmeric has moderately more potassium (2080 vs 1320mg) and iron (55.0 vs 19.80mg). So, what makes ginger unique? It contains compounds known as gingerols and shogaols (plant chemicals/compounds).

Scientists discovered that these gingerols convert into shogaols, reducing inflammation markers in animal and human bodies. When these markers are high, we know that the body is producing inflammation, causing fibrosis, pain, and disease. By lowering these markers, inflammation is reduced, and hopefully specific types of disease (like arthritis, cancer, etc.) can be avoided, reduced, or stabilized.

For thousands of years, Asian medicine has used ginger for a host of illnesses ranging from the common cold to cancer. Western medicine currently uses ginger for the relief of nausea, vomiting, and arthritic pain. Over the past 5 years, clinical research has shown beneficial, but not proven, effects of ginger in the following areas:

- Certain cancers, especially prostate, breast, gastrointestinal
- Diabetes
- Cardiovascular diseases
- Age-related neurological disorders (dementia, Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, etc.)
- Pregnancy-induced and post-operative nausea and vomiting
- Reduction of use of and side effects from NSAIDS (stomach ulcerations and bronchoconstriction)
- Shorter rehabilitation and enhanced function after orthopedic surgery

Should you start taking gobbling ginger supplements? Absolutely not!!

In the limited medical evidence available, bleeding problems occurred with ginger in some conditions/diseases and interacted with some medications. So here are some facts and guidelines for ginger use:

- Ginger doesn’t work for everyone. But do give it time to undo decades of inflammation.
- Start out adding ginger to meals, soups, stews, teas, and coffee. “The less sugar the better.” If you need a sweetener, go with small amounts of honey or stevia
- Chopped ginger root converts into significantly more active anti-inflammatory compounds (shogaols) with moist heat. Dry ginger powder converts to shogaols in both dry and moist heat.
- All supplements, herbs, and spices work better with a healthy diet, exercise, and good sleep habits. Work on these healthy habits at the same time that you add ginger to your diet.
- Discuss ginger supplement use with your physician

So, what are you waiting for.....add some zip to your food with ginger!!