

The Health Benefits of Fenugreek



The Fenugreek plant is a member of the legume family native to North Africa, Southern Europe and Western Asia. The leaves and the tiny bean shaped seeds have been used as medicine for aeons, as well as being a traditional ingredient in many culinary dishes from India to Ethiopia. The name is derived from the Greek words *Foenum-Graecum*, translated as Greek Hay. This is because it was discovered that cattle preferred to eat hay that was mixed with fenugreek.

Fenugreek is slightly bitter and pungent, and has a distinct maple flavour so it is often used as a maple substitute alongside sugar in sweet syrups. In India the leaves are used in many different types of curry and in Ethiopia the most popular spice mix known as Berbere, contains Fenugreek seeds and is the central ingredient in most dishes.

The leaves and the seeds have great medicinal properties including the ability to lower cholesterol and treat diabetes due to its affect on insulin; the hormone that governs the uptake of glucose into the cell. Fenugreek is also a popular digestive, often used to reduce flatulence and relieve digestive discomfort.

Fenugreek is widely known to have oestrogen-promoting properties and can increase milk production in breast-feeding women and improve libido in men and women with low sexual desire. Consuming fenugreek can also increase your metabolism, improve bowel regularity and sooth a sore throat due to its mucilaginous (gel-like) properties.

As well as using Fenugreek in your cooking, the seeds can sprouted and eaten raw for a slightly spicy additive to your salad or simmered in water and used as a therapeutic tea.

Due to its potent medicinal properties, it is wise to consult with a natural health practitioner before using it to treat any particular health condition.