|  |
| --- |
| **Black Pepper**  **(Piper nigrum)(family piperaceae)**  C:\Users\Mindy\Documents\spice rack medicine\Black Pepper\salt n pepper.jpgC:\Users\Mindy\Documents\spice rack medicine\Black Pepper\shakers cactus.jpg  Black pepper needs no introduction to Americans. It is as common as salt on the USA dinner table. Indeed black pepper is not only one of the most popular spices in the world, but also one of the oldest recorded, being mentioned as far back as 1000 BC in ancient Sanskrit literature. Historically black pepper was an important and profitable item in the spice trade between India and Europe via the overland route through the Arab peninsula and Egypt. Black pepper was desired not only to spice up otherwise bland foods, but also for its ability to disguise spoiling food, an important quality before refrigeration became common. At times black pepper was used like money. Pepper was offered as a sacred offering to honor the gods. In ancient Greece and Rome tribute was collected in pepper. Attila the Hun once held Rome hostage, demanding 3,000 pounds peppercorns as tribute. Victorious Genovese soldiers were rewarded two pounds of black pepper after an 1101 assault on Palestine. In the Middle Ages pepper could be used to pay rent, taxes, and dowries and a man’s worth could be measured by his stockpile of pepper. Pepper was even mentioned eloquently by Shakespeare in his plays. The desire for direct access to pepper (and other spices) inspired Spanish exploration and the accidental discovery of the Americas in the 15th century.  C:\Users\Mindy\Documents\spice rack medicine\Black Pepper\atilla.jpg C:\Users\Mindy\Documents\spice rack medicine\Black Pepper\columbus boating.jpg  Black pepper is ground from the dried berries of a trailing/climbing shrub that grows in the shade of trees. It is native to Southern India, especially the Malabar Coast. The berries change color as they mature from first green, to red, then yellow when quite ripe, and finally black upon drying. The traditional Indies name for the plant is marica, a name for the Sun, owing to its very hot potency. The English name “pepper” has its origins in the Sanskrit word pippali, which means berry. It adds spice to any food, but few people now days realize black pepper actually has health benefits.  C:\Users\Mindy\Documents\spice rack medicine\Black Pepper\Black_Pepper forest.jpgC:\Users\Mindy\Documents\spice rack medicine\Black Pepper\pepper plant.jpgC:\Users\Mindy\Documents\spice rack medicine\Black Pepper\pepper vine.jpg  Black pepper, like other spices, it a treasure trove of chemical constituents. This berry contains resins including bitter chavicine, volatile oils and alkaloids including piperine, piperidine, piperettine plus several minor alkaloids and other less studied compounds. The hot pungency of pepper is ascribed to piperine.  C:\Users\Mindy\Documents\spice rack medicine\Black Pepper\piperine.gifC:\Users\Mindy\Documents\spice rack medicine\Black Pepper\imagesCAM2C6I6.jpg  Black pepper has great medicinal value, especially in the herbal traditions of India. Peppercorns are used both internally and externally for its expectorant, stimulant, antipyretic, anthelmintic, carminative, rubefacient, and dermal stimulant properties. In studies, black pepper shows antibacterial activity against Gram negative organisms and also displays antifungal properties. According to Ayurvedic traditions, black pepper alleviates kapha (water and earth) and vata (space and air) doshas, but aggravates the pitta (fire and water) dosha.  Traditional home remedies using black pepper can be used for a variety of conditions including:  Skin Health-Black pepper has been used literally for millennia as treatments for chronic skin conditions. These days, people who are disappointed by pharmaceutical options often return to nature for effective medicine from plants.  RECIPES FOR HEALTH**:**  **C:\Users\Mindy\Documents\spice rack medicine\Black Pepper\pepper paste.jpgC:\Users\Mindy\Documents\spice rack medicine\Black Pepper\pepper poultice.jpgC:\Users\Mindy\Documents\spice rack medicine\Black Pepper\pepper oil.jpg**  **Black Pepper Skin Paste**-Mix finely ground fresh black pepper with enough sesame oil to form a manageable paste. This paste can be applied thinly to a number of skin issues including acne, styes, and boils. Pepper paste helps reduce swelling and pain. It has even been used to treat scabies and vitiligo (white spots), although these conditions are best treated under physician supervision.  **Corn Removing Poultice**-Mix finely ground pepper with an equal part salt and enough vinegar to make a moist paste. This is easily applied to an appropriately sized Band Aids or other bandage. Once applied, this helps soften the corns.  **Pepper Oil**-Soak 1 teaspoon coarse ground peppercorns in 1 cup of your favorite skin oil (almond, olive, coconut, grapeseed, or sesame) for several weeks. Strain out the pepper bits with folded cheesecloth. This oil can reduce itching in a variety of chronic skin diseases. It is recommended that you consider your dosha, as black pepper can aggravate pitta doshas. Pepper olive oil also tastes great salted as a dip for crusty bread.  **Cut Cooks Helper**-Pepper is sometimes used to stop light bleeding in restaurant kitchens. Pour a liberal amount of fresh fine ground pepper on minor cuts, then apply pressure until bleeding stops. Wash off pepper and bandage as usual.  Joint/Muscle Pains – Black pepper has analgesic properties that help reduce the pain associated with muscle aches and rheumatoid arthritis.  RECIPE FOR HEALTH**: C:\Users\Mindy\Documents\spice rack medicine\Black Pepper\imagesCALIYHK0.jpg**  **Fried Pepper Oil**-Fry a small amount of finely ground pepper powder in a little sesame oil. This mixture can be applied as an analgesic for treatment of muscle and joint pains.  Eye Problems-Texts from the 5th century onward in India recommend black pepper for treating a variety of ailments of the eye. This is interesting as modern sensibilities would expect applying pepper directly to the eye would be quite painful and potentially damaging. It is very interesting then that pepper was applied directly to the eyeball as salve, honeyed, decoction or poultice. This scary sounding cure was used for diseases of the eye including pterygium, nightblindeness, and others. Perhaps this fascinating home remedy is best left to skilled Ayurvedic practitioners. Kids don’t try this one at home!   * Oral Care- Black pepper has antimicrobial and anesthetic properties when used for diseases of the mouth. It is no replacement for regular dental visits. Brushing the teeth with fine ground black pepper has been traditionally used in cases of tooth decay and toothache. Likewise black pepper has been mixed with salt to prevent foul breath, dental cavities, toothache, bleeding and painful gums.   RECIPE FOR HEALTH**:**  **Peppered Clove Oil**-If you find yourself with a toothache and no quick access to a dentist, fine fresh-ground black pepper mixed with clove oil and applied to the cavity may reduce pain and slow infection. This should be used only for short periods of time; use for a couple weeks at the most, not months. Long term use can damage nearby soft tissues (gums).   * Throat/Larynx-Ayurveda suggests gargling with black pepper for a sore throat and hoarseness, potentially combined with garlic. * Respiratory Health-Black pepper can thin mucus, relieving blocked phlegm, in cough, sinusitis, asthma and colds. An infusion of black pepper can be used as nasal drops for these conditions, as can honeyed pepper.   RECIPE FOR HEALTH**:**  **C:\Users\Mindy\Documents\spice rack medicine\Black Pepper\pepper honey.jpg C:\Users\Mindy\Documents\spice rack medicine\Black Pepper\imagesCA5WAYNI.jpg**  **Honeyed Pepper**-Fresh fine ground black pepper can be mixed with a spoonful of honey and used to break up mucus congestion. It tastes very spicy as expected, but goes down sweet.  Digestive Tonic-Black pepper has been used for a very long time as a digestive aid. Indeed modern supplement companies often use black pepper to increase absorption of vitamins, minerals and other medicinal constituents. It is said that pepper can improve taste sensation, increase production of gastric juices and saliva, reduce flatulence, upset stomach, diarrhea, anorexia and even chronic colitis. Lightly honeyed pepper may stimulate appetite. Pepper can be combined with baked Asafoetida to alleviate abdominal colicky pains due to gas bloating. Peppered buttermilk has been used to relieve indigestion and stomach heaviness. Black pepper is supposed to be useful in herbal combinations for parasitic worms. Pepper should not be used by persons having ulcers or abdominal surgery as it may further irritate an inflamed/diseased digestive tract; for these a bland diet is often recommended.  Flu/cold Relief- Pepper has been known to be effective in providing some relief of colds and flus.  RECIPE FOR HEALTH**:**  **Spiced Milk Head Cold Help**-To get relief from a head cold, gently boil 1 teaspoon fine freshly ground pepper and a pinch of turmeric in 3 cups milk for several minutes. Sip one cup once a day for three days.  C:\Users\Mindy\Documents\spice rack medicine\Black Pepper\250px-Alice_pig_and_pepper.pngC:\Users\Mindy\Documents\spice rack medicine\Black Pepper\it was a sneezle equiped with black pepper.jpg  Sneezing-Black pepper has long had a reputation for causing sneezes. Some sources blame the piperine as a nasal irritant, others say that it is just that the fine dust of ground pepper is easily caught up in air and then inhaled, yet still others deny that pepper is truly an effective sneeze-producer at all. So far scientists have not chosen to dedicate many studies to this important debate. Bless you!  **References**-The materials discussed here were gleaned from the following sources as well as life experience:  ygoy.com (2010). [Piper nigrum Medicinal Uses](http://ayurveda.ygoy.com/2010/09/20/piper-nigrum-medicinal-uses/). Retrieved from: <http://ayurveda.ygoy.com/2010/09/20/piper-nigrum-medicinal-uses/>  **herbalcureindia.com (2008). Marica (Piper nigrum). Retrieved from:** <http://www.herbalcureindia.com/herbs/piper-nigrum.htm>  mdidea.com (2010). Black Pepper,Black Pepper Seed,Piper nigrum,Piper:the Kind of spices,one of the oldest and the most popular spice in the world. Retrieved from: http://www.mdidea.com/products/new/new06805.html |