

Fenugreek

This fact sheet provides basic information about the herb fenugreek—common names, uses, potential side effects, and resources for more information. The first recorded use of fenugreek is described on an ancient Egyptian papyrus dated to 1500 B.C. Fenugreek seed is commonly used in cooking.

Common Names—fenugreek, fenugreek seed

Latin Name—*Trigonella foenum-graecum*

What It Is Used For

- Historically, fenugreek was used for a variety of health conditions, including menopausal symptoms and digestive problems. It was also used for inducing childbirth.
- Today, it is used for diabetes and loss of appetite, and to stimulate milk production in breastfeeding women. It is also applied to the skin to treat inflammation.

How It Is Used

The dried seeds are ground and taken by mouth or used to form a paste that is applied to the skin.

What the Science Says

- A few small studies have found that fenugreek may help lower blood sugar levels in people with diabetes.
- There is not enough scientific evidence to support the use of fenugreek for any other health condition.

Side Effects and Cautions

- Possible side effects of fenugreek when taken by mouth include gas, bloating, and diarrhea. Fenugreek can cause irritation when applied to the skin.
- Given its historical use for inducing childbirth, women should use caution when taking fenugreek during pregnancy.
- Tell your health care providers about any complementary and alternative practices you use. Give them a full picture of what you do to manage your health. This will help ensure coordinated and safe care.

Sources

Fenugreek. Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database Web site. Accessed at <http://www.naturaldatabase.com> on December 28, 2006.

Fenugreek (*Trigonella foenum-graecum* L. *Leguminosae*). Natural Standard Database Web site. Accessed at <http://www.naturalstandard.com> on December 28, 2006.

Fenugreek seed. In: Blumenthal M, Goldberg A, Brinckman J, eds. *Herbal Medicine: Expanded Commission E Monographs*. Newton, MA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 2000:130-133.

For More Information

Visit the NCCAM Web site at nccam.nih.gov and view:

- *What's in the Bottle? An Introduction to Dietary Supplements* at nccam.nih.gov/health/bottle/
- *Herbal Supplements: Consider Safety, Too* at nccam.nih.gov/health/supplement-safety/

NCCAM Clearinghouse

Toll-free in the U.S.: 1-888-644-6226

TTY (for deaf and hard-of-hearing callers): 1-866-464-3615

E-mail: info@nccam.nih.gov

CAM on PubMed

Web site: nccam.nih.gov/camonpubmed/

NIH Office of Dietary Supplements

Web site: www.ods.od.nih.gov

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