

Elderberry

Sambucus nigra



Elderberry Benefits

Used for its antioxidant activity to lower cholesterol, improve vision, boost the immune system, improve heart health and for coughs, colds, flu, bacterial and viral infections and tonsillitis. Elderberry juice was used to treat a flu epidemic in Panama in 1995.

Elderberries (Sambucus) have been a folk remedy for centuries in North America, Europe, Western Asia, and North Africa, hence the medicinal benefits of elderberries are being investigated and rediscovered. Elderberry is used for its antioxidant activity, to lower cholesterol, to improve vision, to boost the immune system, to improve heart health and for coughs, colds, flu, bacterial and viral infections and tonsillitis. Bioflavonoids and other proteins in the juice destroy the ability of cold and flu viruses to infect a cell. People with the flu who took elderberry juice reported less severe symptoms and felt better much faster than those who did not.

Beneficial components in Elderberries

Elderberries contain organic pigments, tannin, amino acids, carotenoids, flavonoids, sugar, rutin, viburnic acid, **vitamin A** and **B** and a large amount of **vitamin C**. They are also mildly laxative, a diuretic, and diaphoretic. Flavonoids, including quercetin, are believed to account for the therapeutic actions of the elderberry

flowers and berries. According to test tube studies these flavonoids include anthocyanins that are powerful antioxidants and protect cells against damage.

Health Benefits of Elderberries

Elderberries were listed in the CRC Handbook of Medicinal Herbs as early as 1985, and are listed in the 2000 Mosby's Nursing Drug reference for colds, flu, yeast infections, nasal and chest congestion, and hay fever. In Israel, Hasassah's Oncology Lab has determined that elderberry stimulates the body's immune system and they are treating cancer and AIDS patients with it. The wide range of medical benefits (from flu and colds to debilitating asthma, diabetes, and weight loss) is probably due to the enhancement of each individual's immune system.

At the Bundesforschungsanstalt research center for food in Karlsruhe, Germany, scientists conducting studies on Elderberry showed that elderberry anthocyanins enhance immune function by boosting the production of cytokines. These unique proteins act as messengers in the immune system to help regulate immune response, thus helping to defend the body against disease. Further research indicated that anthocyanins found in elderberries possess appreciably more antioxidant capacity than either vitamin E or vitamin C.

Studies at [Austria's University of Graz](#) found that elderberry extract reduces oxidation of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol. Oxidation of LDL cholesterol is implicated in atherogenesis, thus contributing to cardiovascular disease.

[Elderflowers](#) are also used for their health benefits.

Are Elderberries poisonous?

Most species of Sambucus berries are edible when picked ripe and then cooked. Both the skin and pulp can be eaten. However, it is important to note that **most uncooked berries and other parts of plants from this genus are poisonous**. Sambucus nigra is the variety of Elderberry that is most often used for health benefits as it is the only variety considered to be non-toxic even when not cooked, but it is still recommended to cook the berries at least a little to enhance their taste and digestibility.

Elderberry Herb Notes / Side Effects

Latin Name

Sambucus nigra

Common Names

Elderberry, Black Elderberry, North American Elderberry

Properties

antioxidant, diaphoretic, diuretic, laxative, immune-boosting, anti-inflammatory

Uses

Immune system boost, coughs, colds, flu, bacterial infections, viral infections, tonsillitis, lower cholesterol, improved vision and heart health.

Indicated for

Cancer, HIV, asthma and bronchitis, reduce inflammation of the urinary tract and bladder.

Infusions of the fruit are said to be beneficial for nerve disorders, back pain, and have been used to reduce inflammation of the urinary tract and bladder.