

Elderflower



Elderflower Benefits

Elderflower comes from the potentially toxic Elder plant (Sambucus), which is a genus of flowering plants in the family Adoxaceae. It is often overlooked for its medicinal benefits and is most frequently used for its flavoring properties and in making various foods and beverages.

Both the flowers and **berries** in the Elder plant can be used when properly prepared, but all leaves, sticks, and roots should be avoided.

Different Types of Elder

The elder plant is from the genus *Sambucus* with more than 2 dozen identified species around the world. Identification of species and common names often refers to the region in which these plants are found or the color of their berries. A few elder species include:
Sambucus nigra - Black Elder/European elder/Elderberry
Sambucus mexicana - Mexican Elder
Sambucus racemosa - European Red Elder
Sambucus australasica - Yellow Elder
Sambucus adnata - Asian Dwarf Elder

Different species of elder have berries that vary in color from black or bluish black to red and even yellow or white. The elderflower is white to pale cream in color. Although the elder plant is found in areas all over the world, its presence is most commonly seen in the northern hemisphere, with at least 10 identified species found in North America.

Health Benefits of Elderflower

Elderflower has been used in traditional medicine all over the world in many different cultures due to its antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties. The most common uses are for colds and flu, sinus infections, and other respiratory disturbances. As a supplement, elderflower also has diuretic and laxative properties and is helpful in relieving occasional constipation. Elderflower has antibacterial and antiviral properties and may also help alleviate some allergies and boost the functioning of the immune system. Topically, elderflower might help reduce pain and swelling in joints due to some forms of arthritis and is used to stop bleeding. As an oral rinse, elderflower can be used for its antiseptic properties as a mouthwash and gargle. Elderflower also reduces blood sugar levels, very similar to the way insulin works.

Elderflower against MSRA

Research in Ireland showed that elderflower extract was effective in killing many common hospital pathogens, including methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)¹. This study gave scientific proof of elderflower's antibacterial properties against most gram negative and gram positive bacteria tested that align with traditional medicine uses of the past. Further study of elderflower components showed the potential for antiviral and anti-inflammatory benefits as well.

Active Ingredients in Elderflower

Elderflower is rich in bioflavonoids, mostly flavones and flavonols, that are most commonly known for their antioxidant, anti-cancer, anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties. The most abundant flavonols in elderflower are quercetin, isoquercitrin and anthocyanins, which have antiviral properties as well. Elderflower also contains chlorogenic acids, such as cinnamic acid, which may help with allergies, regulate blood glucose levels and have a laxative effect on the body. Triterpenoids, especially β -amyryn, erythrodiol, and oleanolic acid, are also found in elderflower. These triterpenoids offer a variety of health benefits including analgesic, anti-inflammatory, and anti-cancer effects.

How to Take Elderflower

Elderflower can be dried for later use or may be soaked or cooked down into a drink. While elderflower is typically found to be safe for consumption, the leaves, twigs, and roots are toxic and can lead to the build up of poisonous cyanide in the body. Note: All but the **black**

elderberries are toxic when eaten raw, so should be cooked prior to use. However, even the black variety should be cooked prior to use due to the risk of nausea and other gastrointestinal complaints.

Elderflower Supplements

Elderflower supplements are available alone or in combination with other herbs. Supplements can be found as dried and cut flowers, in tea bags, in tinctures and concentrates, and in pills and capsules.

Elderflower Herb Notes / Side Effects

Elderflower Risks

Elderflower can cause gastrointestinal disturbances, such as nausea and diarrhea, especially when consumed in large amounts. Since elderflower can lower blood sugar levels, use by diabetics should be monitored. Avoid using prior to and immediately following surgery as well. Cook berries before use and avoid other parts of the elder plant due to toxicity.