



JUNE 02, 2017



# Ginger: A Folk Remedy Put to the Test

by [BERKELEY WELLNESS](#) | DECEMBER 27, 2016



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Used in cooking and herbal medicine around the world, [ginger](#) is the rhizome (underground stem) of *Zingiber officinale*, which grows in warm climates. It contains many interesting compounds. The best known of these are called gingerols, which produce the hot sensation in your mouth, as well as the pungent flavor and aroma. Fresh or powdered, pickled or candied, ginger adds a unique zest to any dish.

Like many herbs and plant-derived foods, ginger does great things in the lab (in animals or isolated human cells), but its proven medicinal effects, in real life, remain limited. Studies usually use ginger extracts, which can vary in their chemical composition.

## Some findings:

- Ginger may have anti-cancer properties. For instance, a [lab study](#) from the University of Michigan, published in *BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine* back in 2007, found that ginger keeps ovarian cancer cells at bay—in a test tube. Similarly, at 2013 [lab study](#) in *Nutrition and Cancer* found that compounds in ginger extract may inhibit the proliferation of prostate cancer cells. Other studies suggest that ginger may have beneficial effects on [breast cancer](#) and [colon cancer](#) cells. This is a long way from saying that ginger can prevent or treat cancer in humans, however.
- It can inhibit the growth of certain bacteria. For example, in some [lab research](#), it reduced *H. pylori*, the bacteria in the stomach responsible for most ulcers and possibly stomach cancer.
- [Lab studies](#) also suggest that compounds in ginger might help manage asthma symptoms.
- An [Australian review](#) in *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine* in 2012 suggested that ginger may help control blood sugar and have other beneficial effects in people with type 2 diabetes.
- Ginger has anti-inflammatory properties and thus has been studied as a treatment for arthritis—with mixed results. More research is needed on ginger for arthritis (as well as other proposed herbal remedies), according to several [research reviews](#).
- The best evidence for ginger concerns its ability to relieve nausea and vomiting, such as occurs in early pregnancy. A review on various treatments by the [Cochrane Collaboration](#) concluded that “The use of ginger products may be helpful to women, but the evidence of effectiveness was limited and not consistent, though three recent studies support ginger over placebo.” Ginger may also relieve [post-operative nausea](#), along with [nausea following chemotherapy](#). Many people take ginger for motion sickness—though there’s no solid evidence it helps for this, it’s unlikely to hurt.

If you want to try ginger for nausea and vomiting, you can buy ginger capsules. But keep in mind, large doses of ginger may cause indigestion and nausea, rather than cure them, and long-term safety is unknown. You can try candied ginger or ginger tea. Most bottled ginger ales contain little or no real ginger.

Also see [Ginger: A Global Favorite](#) for more about types of ginger, ginger products, and how to cook with it.



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