

THE EFFECTS OF GINGER ON NAUSEA IN PREGNANCY

One of the most uncomfortable and debilitating sensations a person can experience is nausea. Nausea is defined as a sickness in the stomach accompanied by the urge to vomit, and while it can be experienced by anyone, it is a well-known symptom of pregnancy, and is in fact the number-one complaint among pregnant women. Anyone, pregnant or not, who has ever experienced what it feels like to be nauseous can tell you that it is miserable, and managing it is a top priority.

Since ancient times, the root of the *Zingiber officinale* plant (more commonly known as ginger or “ginger root”) has been used as both a popular ingredient in food as well as a medicine. Ginger is thought to have originated in India, but different varieties have been found worldwide, most commonly in South Asia, East Africa and the Caribbean. Traditional uses of ginger as a medicine are greatly varied including use as a cure for colds, colic and even as a treatment for heart disease. While there are many medicinal uses for ginger, the most common use in modern practices is probably for the treatment of nausea.

The components in ginger that aid in the relief of nausea are gingerol and shogaol. These substances are volatile oils related to capsaicin, the compound that makes chile peppers spicy. These compounds are thought to have a direct local effect on the gastrointestinal system, unlike pharmaceutical nausea medications, which generally work on the central nervous system and are therefore more likely to cause undesirable side effects.

It is estimated that around 50%- 90% of pregnant women experience nausea and vomiting, particularly in the earlier stages of their pregnancy. This unfortunate reaction is not only extremely uncomfortable, but it can interfere with the woman's family and social life as well as her career. Feeling sick all the time can also take a toll on the woman's psychological wellness and can have a severely negative effect on this period of time in her life that is supposed to be very special.

During pregnancy a woman must closely monitor what goes into her body, and avoid any foods or substances that may harm the developing fetus. Safety is top priority in pregnant women, but the desire to keep the developing baby safe often results in less-than ideal

conditions for the expectant mother. Unfortunately, during pregnancy the woman is often plagued by a variety of uncomfortable sensations, the most common being nausea. The restriction of substances during pregnancy that can be harmful to the baby often includes many medications that the woman may otherwise take to ease her discomfort. With a desire to feel better, many pregnant women turn to more natural remedies to ease symptoms. Ginger is one of the more common substances women try taking to alleviate nausea, and is valued as a more natural alternative to anti-emetic drugs which have a tendency to have undesirable side-effects.

In the study Effects of Ginger Capsules on Pregnancy, Nausea, and Vomiting, it was found that taking 250mg of ginger four times each day significantly reduced the intensity of nausea and instances of vomiting in pregnant women compared to the women who were given a placebo. This study included 70 women, and four weeks of data was collected before the results were analyzed. The women reported significant relief with no adverse side effects caused by the ginger supplementation. The results of this study supported data found in numerous similar tests.

In the same study, it is mentioned that doses of up to 1500mg/ day were tested and proven to be safe for both the mother and developing fetus. While it was proven that ginger supplementation is safe in higher dosages, the authors of the study found that the lower doses were just as effective in the management of nausea. The scientific evidence on safety presented in this study is only emphasized by the centuries of documented safe usage in populations around the world.

Ginger has been used since ancient times for the treatment of countless ailments, but its use seems to be particularly effective in the treatment of nausea. Because pregnant women must be so cautious with their food and medication choices, they are often left with few options for relief from the crippling nausea they experience. Since compounds in ginger root work directly on the gastrointestinal system, instead of the whole central nervous system, ginger consumption has proven to be an especially safe and effective treatment option for pregnant women suffering from nausea and morning sickness. After a great deal of research, I would definitely recommend ginger consumption or supplementation as a more natural treatment for nausea to anyone, but especially to pregnant women who have so few other safe options.

References

- Ozgoli, M.Sc., Giti, Marjan Goli, M.Sc., and Masoumeh Simbar, Ph.D., M.H.P.Ed. "Effects of Ginger Capsules on Pregnancy, Nausea, and Vomiting." *THE JOURNAL OF ALTERNATIVE AND COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE* 15.3 (2009): 243-246. Web. 21 May 2010.