

BASIL

'The King of Herbs'

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1. Basil is a fragrant herb in the mint family.
2. There are 30 different varieties of basil, such as the American basil, lime basil and spice basil. They differ in taste, smell and color.
3. Owing to its medical properties, it has been used in traditional medicine for thousands of years.
4. Basil is widely used in Mediterranean diets, Italian and Greek foods¹.

What is in basil?

Basil has 47 natural compounds. They are rich in vitamin-like compounds that contribute to basil's protective functions. Antioxidants in basil include flavonoids, polyphenols, and vitamins A and C^{1,7}.

What do studies say about the health benefits?

Basil possesses **antioxidant**, antimicrobial, anticancer and **anti-inflammatory** functions. The above terms mean that they protect our body cells, reduce the risk of cancer, and lower inflammation².

Studies have revealed the following health benefits associated with basil:

- **Blood glucose and lipid levels:** Basil consumed as powdered leaves, juice or ethanol extracts decreased blood sugar and blood pressure, especially in people with diabetes^{3, **}



- **Mental health and brain function:** The natural compounds in basil protect the nerves and brain^{2, *}
- **Stress and sleep:** In a study, using holy basil in liquid form helped people reduce stress and improve sleep quality^{4, ***}
- **Heart health:** Nutrients and other organic constituents in basil control blood cholesterol, maintain blood pressure, and prevent heart disease^{5, **}
- **Cancer patients' wellbeing:** People undergoing treatment for thyroid cancer, who consumed basil tea, reported benefits such as reduced mouth irritation and reduced dryness^{6, *}.
Research is ongoing to further support the above evidence.

Strength of evidence

*** Strong ** Moderate * Basic

How much Basil is safe to consume?

Although standardized dosing for basil does not exist, traditional practices and human trials offer guidance:

- Culinary dosages (a few pinches) are safe.
- Dried Basil Leaf Powder: A few pinches can be used in tea preparation⁸.
- Fresh Basil Leaves: Traditionally, about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp/day consumed raw or in tea⁹.

Functional Foods

- Usage of supplements or concentrated extracts should be under your doctor's guidance.
- Functional foods, including basil, are not meant to substitute for a healthy diet, nor should they be used to replace prescribed medication.
- Effects may vary from person to person.

How to use Basil?

Culinary uses: Fresh or dried basil leaves are used to flavor soups, stews, salads, meats, and sauces ¹⁰.

Salt replacer: This would be an alternative to flavor foods for those who restrict salt.

Functional foods: Basil leaves are incorporated into foods like cookies and biscuits to enhance nutritional value ¹¹.

Resources

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