



BLACK SEED

Also Known As:

Ajenuz, Arañuel, Baraka, Black Cumin, Black Caraway, Charnuska, Cominho Negro, Cominho-Negro, Fennel Flower, Fennel-Flower, Fitch, Kalajaji, Kalajira, Kalonji, Love in a Mist, Mugrela, Nigelle de Cr te, Nutmeg Flower, Nutmeg-Flower, Roman-Coriander, Schwarzk mmel, Small Fennel, Toute  pice, Upakuncika.

CAUTION: See separate listings for Caraway, Coriander, Cumin, Fennel, and Nutmeg.

Scientific Name:

Nigella sativa.

Family: Ranunculaceae.

People Use This For:

Orally, black seed is used for treating gastrointestinal conditions including gas, colic, diarrhea, dysentery, constipation and hemorrhoids. It is also used orally for respiratory conditions, including asthma, allergies, cough, bronchitis, emphysema, flu and congestion. Additionally, it is used orally as an antihypertensive, immunoprotectant, anticancer agent, and vermifuge. It is used orally for women's health: including as a contraceptive, for stimulation of menstruation, and increasing milk flow.

Topically, black seed is used for inflammatory conditions including rheumatism, headache and skin conditions.

Traditionally, black seed has been used for headache, toothache, nasal congestion, and intestinal worms. It has also been used for conjunctivitis, abscesses, and parasites.

In combination with cysteine, vitamin E, and saffron, black seed is used to decrease cisplatin-induced side effects.

In foods, black seed is used as a flavoring or spice.

Safety:

LIKELY SAFE ...when used orally in amounts found in foods (6).

There is insufficient reliable information available about the safety of black seed for its other uses.

PREGNANCY: LIKELY UNSAFE ...when used orally in amounts exceeding those found in food. Black seed may decrease or inhibit uterine contractions (241) and may have contraceptive activity (242).

LACTATION: Insufficient reliable information available; avoid using.

Effectiveness:

There is insufficient reliable information available about the effectiveness of black seed.

Mechanism of Action:

In allergic conditions, black seed might have antihistamine effects. Although not yet demonstrated in humans, low concentration of the constituent nigellone has been shown to inhibit the release of histamine from mast cells in animals (233). Black seed is thought to have immunoprotectant effects. Preliminary evidence suggests it may help minimize chemotherapy-induced decreases in hemoglobin and leukocyte counts. It may also enhance the production of certain human interleukins and alter macrophages (234). Black seed is also used as an anticancer agent. According to preliminary studies, black seed may inhibit stomach tumors, carcinoma, and Ehrlich ascites carcinoma (236, 239). The black seed constituents thymoquinone and dithymoquinone are actually cytotoxic toward human cells (238). Although some evidence suggests thymoquinone may offer protection against chemically induced hepatotoxicity (237, 240), a study in rats indicates that black seed may actually be hepatotoxic. A fixed oil from black seed is reported to have anti-eicosanoid and antioxidant effects, which may support anti-inflammatory activity (235), but this effect has not been studied in humans. The essential oil may have antimicrobial and anthelmintic activity, particularly against staphylococcus as well as other gram-positive and gram-negative bacteria (243, 1516). Black seed may have anti-oxytocic potential, and may inhibit spontaneous contractions (241). It may also have contraceptive activity (242).

Adverse Reactions:

Topically, black seed oil can cause allergic contact dermatitis (6). Black seed may be associated with hepatotoxicity based on preliminary animal research (245).

Interactions with Herbs & Supplements:

None known.

Interactions with Drugs:

None known.

Interactions with Foods:

None known.

Interactions with Lab Tests:

None known.

Interactions with Diseases or Conditions:

None known.

Dosage/Administration:

No typical dosage.

Editor's Comments:

Black seed is reported to have been used for over 2000 years. Recordings mention it as far back as 1400 years. Black seed was found in the tomb of King Tutankhamen (6). An issued patent covers the use of black seed to stimulate immune-competent cells in humans; however, this should not be taken as evidence for the safety and efficacy of black seed as an immunostimulant (246).

BLACK SEED (cont'd)

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