Herb of the Month

January 1, 2000 By Michael Onstott

Ginger

Part: Root
Form: Fresh or dried, powdered,
preserved, candied or fluid extract
Uses: Treat or prevent motion sickness, nausea, vomiting, appetite loss, indigestion, excess gas
Dose: Two to four grams dried powder or
chopped fresh root (boiled as tea),
or a 500-mg capsule two to three times daily
Cost: $2 to $12 a month
Where: Produce and Asian markets, health
food stores, AIDS buyers clubs

Ginger may look like a gnarly old root, but it's also a spicy food, healing tea and useful drug. Thanks for the herb's therapeutic properties—and its distinctive smell and taste—are due to fragrant oils such as gingerols. Studies have shown that these oils can prevent or treat nausea and vomiting associated with motion sickness, chemotherapy and surgery. For med-induced queasiness, some PWAs prefer ginger to prescription drugs or marijuana. The pungent herb stimulates appetite and digestion, tones the intestinal muscles, helps expel intestinal gas and supports heart function. In traditional Asian medicine, ginger is used to treat colds, coughs, diarrhea and inflammatory joint diseases such as arthritis. It is also used to promote body cleansing through perspiration. For PWAs in this era of nausea-promoting drugs and digestive disturbances, a little ginger might add just the right spice to life.

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