

Health benefits of bishop's weed (AJWAIN)

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ABSTRACT

Trachyspermum ammi is commonly referred as ajowan caraway, bishop's weed or carom. It is an annual herb in the family *Apiaceae* (or *Umbelliferae*) and has its origin in the Asia Minor or Persia regions, from where it spread to the Indian subcontinent. The plant is mainly cultivated in Iran and India. Rajasthan produced about 55% of India's total output in 2006. The fruits are rarely eaten raw; they are commonly dry-roasted or fried in ghee (clarified butter). This allows the spice to develop a more subtle and complex aroma. In Indian cuisine, it is often part of a chunk, a mixture of spices fried in oil or butter, which is used to flavor lentil dishes. It is widely used in Pakistani cuisine as well, and it is also an important ingredient for herbal medicine practiced there. In Afghanistan, the fruits are sprinkled over bread and biscuits. The leaves of *Plectra thus amboinicus*, sometimes called "Indian borage," are also occasionally called "ajwain leaves." It is one of the important herbs for Indian kitchen to make the Indian cuisine tasty. All the parts of this herb have a very strong smell; hence, it is called *Ugragandha* in Sanskrit. Ajwain has many health and medicinal values. It is well-known seed for Instant Remedy for Stomachache. The seed, oil, flowers, and extract are used as medicine for various diseases. It is also one of the potent medicines to kill worms. It is extremely beneficial for earache, toothache, influenza, heart problems, arthritis, and nasal blockage.

KEYWORDS: *Apiaceae*, Herbal medicine, Indian borage, *Trachyspermum ammi*

INTRODUCTION

Bishop weed (*Trachyspermum ammi*) is small, oval-shaped, seed-like fruits are pale brown schizocarps, which resemble the seeds of other plants in the *Apiaceae* family such as caraway, cumin, and fennel. The plant is a small, cool season annual herb which grows up two to three feet in height.^[1] They have a bitter and pungent taste, with a flavor similar to anise and oregano. They smell almost exactly like thyme because they also contain thymol, but they are more aromatic and less subtle in taste, as well as being somewhat bitter and pungent. Even a small number of fruits tend to dominate the flavor of a dish. Hydrodistillation of ajwain fruits yields an essential oil consisting primarily of thymol, gamma-terpinene, p-cymene, and more than 20 trace compounds which are predominantly terpenoids. Bishop weed is used in traditional Ayurveda primarily for stomach disorders such as indigestion, bloating, abdominal pain, flatulence, diarrhea, and colic along with respiratory distress and loss of

appetite. In Siddha medicine, the crushed fruits are applied externally as a poultice.

Cultivation

They are widely grown in gardens for their seeds which are used for both culinary and medicinal purposes. These plants can be grown easily from the seeds.^[1]

Well-drained loam soil with a pH between 6.5 and 8.2 is ideal for them. They grow well in cold temperatures ranging from 15°C to 25°C. The plants can grow both indirect and partial sunlight. Relative humidity between 65% and 70% is required for them to grow properly. The umbels are harvested after they are properly matured. Harvesting is done during the later parts of winter or earlier in spring.

Nutritional Values

Ajwain seeds contain health benefiting essential oils such as thymol, a monopterone derivative class of chemical compound which gives aromatic fragrances to seeds. Besides, they also compose of small amounts of other phytochemicals^[2] such as *pinene*, *cymene*, *limonene*, and *terpinene*. The active principles in the ajwain may help increase the digestive function of the intestinal tract by facilitating the release of gut juices (gastrointestinal

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secretions). Thymol, the essential oil obtained from ajwain has local anesthetic, antibacterial, and antifungal properties. Likewise in caraway, ajowan seeds too are a rich source of fiber, minerals, vitamins, and antioxidants.

Nutritional value for 100 gm of this spice.^[3]

Nutrients	Amounts
Calories	305
Total Fat	25 gm
Saturated	4 gm
Monounsaturated	5 gm
Polyunsaturated	15 gm
Trans	0 gm
Cholesterol	0 mg
Potassium	0 mg
Sodium	10 mg
Total carbohydrates	43 gm
Sugars	0 gm
Dietary Fiber	39 g
Protein	16 g
Vitamin A	0%
Vitamin C	0%
Calcium	0%
Iron	0%

Culinary Uses

- In Punjab province of India and Pakistan, the spice seeds notably added to make bread, *ajwain paratha*.
- Some Indian vegetarian bean/lentil and chicken/fish curries contain this spice, and in the Middle East, it is used to flavor meat and rice dishes.
- Ajowan seeds used generously as a condiment in snacks, savory biscuits, cookies, to flavor drinks, soups, and sauces in India.
- They also used in pickling along with fenugreek, mustard seeds, turmeric,^[2] etc.

Medicinal Uses

The entire Ajwain plant is very beneficial for health and medicinal aspects. Ajwain seeds, fruits, leaves, and oil are used for medicinal purposes.^[4]

Instant Remedy for Stomachache

It has alcoholic qualities in a very mild form; therefore, it may be used as instant stomach pain. Ajwain+small quantity of salt, when sip with warm water is quite beneficial for indigestion and stomach pain.^[2] The person suffering from indigestion and anorexia, 1 tsp of Ajwain seed may be taken along with food.

Ajwain for Asthma

Inhalation of the smoke of Ajwain acts as bronchodilator and makes the breathing pattern easier.^[5] The person suffering from Asthma may take the paste of Ajwain + Jaggery, 1 tsp, twice a day. This mixture is helpful in asthma treatment.

Prevents Cold

For chronic and recurrent cold, it is recommended to take fried seeds of ajwain in the dose of 2 g for

15–20 days. Inhaling of its grind seed is also beneficial in case of headache, migraine, and cold and cough.^[4] Chewing Ajwain seeds with lukewarm water is also a good cure for Cough. Ajwain helps in clearing nasal blockage by discharging the mucus easily. Ajwain powder taken in a clean cloth if inhaled frequently cures a migraine headache.

Diabetes Mellitus

1 tsp of Ajwain seeds + 4 tsp of Bael leaves juice if taken 2–3 times a day, are effective in polyuria commonly seen in case of diabetes.^[6]

Lessen Greying of Hairs

Ajwain helps in lessening premature graying of hairs. Cook curry leaves + dry grapes + ajwain in a cup of water and drinks the mixture every day to prevent pre maturation of hairs.^[7]

Relief from Arthritis Pain

Ajwain has antibiotic properties, thus helping in reducing redness and combat inflammation. They also have anesthetic properties that give relief from pain and swelling.^[6] Apply the paste of crushed ajwain seeds to joints or soak in a tub of warm water with the hand full of ajwain seeds in it to get relief.

Dissolves Kidney Stone

Ajwain when mixed with honey and vinegar and used for 10 days, dissolves kidney stones that ultimately remove with urine.^[6] Ajwain water treats intestinal pains caused due to indigestion and also gets rid of liver and kidney malfunctions.

Helps in Reducing Weight

The appetite-stimulating properties and the laxative components of Ajwain fastens the bowel movement thus helping in weight loss.^[8] Regular taking of ajwain also helps to regulate obesity.

Prevents Cholera

It has the ability to minimize the impact of threadworms and intestinal bacterial infection. Hence, it is good to give cholera patients.

Helps in Treating Irregular Menses and Menstrual Cramps

Drinking Oma water helps in curing problems of indigestion for pregnant women by cleaning the uterus and also solves the issues of irregular periods.^[6] Oma water is prepared by boiling 2 spoons of roasted Ajwain in water. Carom seeds work as a nerve tonic and are used to relax nerves during menses, decreasing menstrual cramps. You can also apply carom seed oil on the lower abdomen to get relief.

Acidity Control and Prevention

Ajwain seeds have anti-hyperacidity properties. A patient of acidity or hyperacidity may consume ajwain along with lukewarm water + salt either in the morning or after meal. When taken for 10–15 days, it shows a good result read acidity control and prevention through herbal means.^[7]

Relief From Ear and Toothache

To get relief from earaches, two drops of ajwain oil are enough. And to cure a toothache, gargle with lukewarm water combined with 1 teaspoon ajwain and salt. Ajwain oil^[9] mixed with olive oil and water is an excellent panacea for toothache and bad mouth odor. This mixture also maintains oral hygiene.

Helps to Get Rid of Alcohol Addiction

To get rid of alcohol addiction, the decoction of ajwain may be taken in the dose of 30 ml at night for 50 days. Persons, who use alcohol excessively, may experience acute stomach pain.^[6] For such patients, 1 tsp of ajwain seeds may be consumed along with warm water twice a day.

Reduces Gas and Flatulence

Ajwain is one of the best herbal wonder drugs for gas, flatulence, and indigestion. The distilled water of it is good for the above-said problems and also enhances appetite.^[3]

Helps to Get Rid of Boils, Itching and Eczema

Ajwain seeds ground into a paste with lukewarm water and applied on the affected parts of the body can get rid of boils and itching.^[8]

Remedy for Flu

Carom seeds boiled with cinnamon powder in water are one of the best natural remedies for flu.

Cures Chest Pain

Ajwain water can cure chest pains. You can add jaggery to get instant relief.^[6]

Excellent For lactating Women

Ajwain water is excellent for lactating women as it increases Milkflow.^[4]

CONCLUSION

Ajwain or Bishop's weed or carom seeds are the best things to have ever happened to humankind, especially to those of us who suffer from digestive problems on a regular basis. They have a slew of benefits apart from just curing an upset stomach. It is very useful for many health and medicinal purposes.^[4] Ajwain water is an effective ayurvedic marvel against many diseases and disorders. Ajwain water is given to small babies having colic and gas related problems. It is one of the best home remedies.

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