

The Health Benefits of Amalaki

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Amalaki has long been used as a natural remedy by practitioners of Ayurveda, an alternative medicine system that has its roots in ancient India. Amalaki (*Ēmblika officinalis*) is a fruit with a bitter taste that's not usually eaten on its own, but instead prepared as part of a meal or condensed into a supplement.

According to Ayurvedic medicine, Amalaki is helpful for a wide variety of health problems, improving healthy functioning of the liver, heart, brain, and lungs. It's also a component of a popular Ayurvedic remedy called [triphala](#), thought to enhance immunity and treat various health conditions. In Sanskrit, the word *Amalaki* means "the sustainer."

Amalaki can be consumed as a fruit, but may be hard to find fresh in the United States since it's usually grown in Southeast Asia. Amalaki can be purchased as a powder, extract, tincture, capsule, or tablet from online retailers or at stores that sell vitamins and supplements.

Also Known As

- Amla
- Indian gooseberry

Health Benefits

Amalaki is widely used as a medicinal plant in Ayurveda and traditional medicine in Southeast Asia. It's known as a rich source of nutrients, including vitamin C, amino acids, pectin, and antioxidant-rich polyphenols such as tannins and gallic acid.¹ Amalaki also has healing properties such as anti-inflammatory, anti-diabetic, antifungal, antiviral, and antibacterial.²

In Ayurvedic medicine, Amalaki has been used to treat a variety of conditions, including:²

- Anemia
- Diarrhea
- Inflammation
- Jaundice
- Diabetes

Although the efficacy of Amalaki for treating these conditions in particular has not been proven, the fruit has been studied as a treatment for heartburn, high cholesterol, and diabetes. Many of these studies show promising results, but more evidence is needed to determine whether Amalaki can be used as a complementary treatment for specific conditions.

Heartburn

Studies have shown Amalaki may be beneficial in treating heartburn. A 2018 study tested 68 people who had symptoms of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). One group was given two 500-milligram (mg) Amalaki tablets twice a day after meals while the other group was given a placebo. After four weeks, the patients who took the Amalaki tablets had a significant reduction in heartburn and regurgitation symptoms.³

High Cholesterol

Amalaki may have some benefit in preventing hyperlipidemia, which is characterized by abnormally high levels of lipids (fats) in the blood. A 2019 study tested 98 patients who received a 500-mg Amalaki tablet or placebo twice a day. Those who received the Amalaki extract had significantly lower total cholesterol and triglycerides.⁴ The researchers noted larger studies are needed to help confirm the effectiveness of Amalaki for high cholesterol.

Diabetes

Some research has looked at the effect of Amalaki on diabetes. A 2012 study on diabetic rats found that Amalaki extract improved antioxidant levels, limited free radicals, and reduced the risk of diabetes complications.⁵ Because this study was conducted on animals, more research is needed to determine whether Amalaki can benefit humans with diabetes.

Age-Related Conditions

Amalaki may have anti-aging properties. A study of people age 45 to 60 revealed that Amalaki helped maintain the length of DNA [telomeres](#), structures located at the ends of chromosomes to protect them from damage.⁶ As cells divide, telomeres tend to become shorter. The telomeres eventually become too short for the cell to divide, and the cell ages rather than replicates.

The researchers concluded that because Amalaki helped maintain the length of telomeres, it may promote healthy aging over time. Further research is needed to determine how Amalaki might affect aging and age-related diseases.

Possible Side Effects

Because Amalaki is rich in fiber, it may lead to gastrointestinal issues, including bloating, stomachache, and diarrhea.¹ In addition, it may lower blood sugar, which may cause problems if for people with diabetes who take medication. Check with your doctor before using an Amalaki supplement to make sure it's safe for you, particularly if you have a health condition like diabetes, or if you're pregnant or nursing.

Dosage and Preparation

Because Amalaki fruit is bitter, it usually is mixed with other foods or used in candies and juice.¹ It is generally safe to eat in foods. It's also rich in vitamin C, which is water soluble, so any excess amount leaves the body as urine.⁷

As a supplement, it can be dried and ground into a powder to mix into beverages. Amalaki supplements are typically available in a 500-milligram (mg) capsule. Dosages may differ depending on the product, but in research a typical dose is 500 mg capsules twice daily.³

Amalaki can be used on its own, or as one of three fruits used to make up the Ayurvedic supplement known as Triphala. Triphala is typically prescribed by Ayurvedic practitioners for the relief of abdominal pain, bloating, and constipation. The other two fruits that are used come from the bibhataki and haritaki trees.

What to Look For

You can find Amalaki as a capsule, tablet, or powder. Dietary supplements aren't reviewed by the government before they are marketed, so be skeptical of any health claims that are made by the manufacturer.⁸

Look for Amalaki supplements that have been tested by an independent third party, including the U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP), NSF International, and ConsumerLab. This certification can help ensure that the supplement contains the correct ingredients.

When choosing an organic supplement, look for the U.S. Department of Agriculture label that says "USDA Certified Organic." This indicates the product contains at least 95% organic ingredients, which helps limit exposure to pesticides and other toxins.

Although Amalaki has been used for centuries, much is unknown about its safety and effectiveness. Research is limited about its benefits, so do not use it as a treatment for any health condition. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, manufacturers can't legally claim that a dietary supplement will treat or cure a disease.

Other Questions

Is Amalaki good for your liver?

Amalaki could have some protective effects for the liver, but studies are limited. According to a 2013 review, Amalaki has been found to prevent or improve toxic effects from chemicals in the environment that damage liver cells.⁹ More research is needed to determine whether Amalaki is beneficial for improving specific liver diseases or conditions.

Is Amalaki good for your hair and skin?

Due to its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects, Amalaki can sometimes be used in beauty products such as facial masks, shampoos, and soaps. Amalaki is thought to strengthen hair as well as brighten your complexion, but there is little scientific evidence to back these claims.

Researchers have looked at whether Amalaki can help prevent hair loss. One study examined 17 Thai plants commonly used for hair treatment. Of the 17 plants, Amalaki extract was found to be the second most effective to inhibit an enzyme called 5 α -reductase.¹⁰ A 5 α -reductase inhibitor is sometimes used to treat male-pattern baldness. More research is needed to determine whether that means Amalaki could be used as a treatment for hair loss in humans.