

# DR. CHRISTOPHER'S *Herbal Legacy Newsletter*

November 13, 2013

## Flax (*Linum usitatissimum*)



Flax was brought to North America by colonists in the 1600's. It was mainly produced for linen cloth and linseed oil used in paint for the growing colonies. With the invention of the cotton gin in the 1800's flax production dropped dramatically as cotton gained dominance agriculturally. It wasn't until the 1980's when an emphasis on environmentally friendly products began that flax saw a renewed popularity.

Today flax seed and flax seed oil are both popular items used in the natural health field. Flaxseeds contain lignans, a type of phytoestrogen that may protect against breast and prostate cancers. Flaxseed is the best plant source of healthy omega-3's which are also found in fish. Flaxseed is a rare plant-based complete protein source. It contains every amino acid that your body can't make on its

own. Flaxseed also contains both soluble and insoluble fiber which helps regulate bowel function and prevent constipation.

Here are some of the many health benefits you may see from consuming 1-2 Tbls. per day of ground flaxseed (brown or golden) or flaxseed oil.

- Decreases the risk of developing heart disease.
- Lowers total cholesterol.
- Strengthens the immune system.
- Lowers the amount of insulin used by diabetics.
- Helps alleviate pain and inflammation associated with rheumatoid arthritis.
- Improves symptoms of depression and improves mental function.
- Helps alleviate dry skin and some forms of eczema and psoriasis.
- Helps alleviate hair loss and dandruff.
- Helps improve the metabolism and absorption of calcium.
- Traditionally used for hot flashes and breast pain.

- Laxative.

It is important to not heat or cook with the oil because it destroys the beneficial properties. Instead the oil should be added to smoothies or yogurt or combined with apple cider vinegar to make a salad dressing. Ground seed can be added to smoothies, granola bars, and breads or sprinkled over salads or cereal. The seeds must be ground in order to be used nutritionally in the body. (Fresh ground is best.)

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