

HEALTH BENEFITS OF TULSI (*Ocimum sanctum*)

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Introduction-

Medicinal plants are part and parcel of human society to combat with diseases, from the dawn of civilisation. *Ocimum sanctum* is globally known for more than 2000 years as one of the most versatile medicinal plants, having a wide spectrum of biological activities. It is a popular sacred plant of Indian subcontinent, commonly known as tulsi or holy basil. Basils are native to tropical Asia and are likely to have originated in India. It is an annual plant, usually propagated through seeds. Tulsi has a high index in a variety of pharmacological activities like anti-microbial, immune-modulatory, anti-stress, anti-inflammatory, anti-ulcer, antidiabetic, hepato-protective, chemoprotective, anti-hyperlipidemic, cardioprotective, antioxidant, antitussive, radio-protective, memory enhancing, anti-arthritic, antifertility, antihypertensive, anticoagulant, anti-cataract and anthelmintic activities.



Table 1- Botanical classification of *Ocimum* species

Kingdom	Plantae
Order	Lamiales
Family	<i>Lamiaceae</i>

Genus	<i>Ocimum</i>
Species	<i>sanctum/tenuiflorum, gratissimum, canum, basclicum, kilimandschricum, americanum, camphora, micranthum</i>
Vernacular names	Ram tulsi, vanatulsi

Medicinal properties:

Antispasmodic, appetizer, carminative, galactagogue, stomachic. Basil is antispasmodic, appetizer, carminative, galactagogue and stomachic. It is used for stomach cramps, gastric catarrh, vomiting, intestinal catarrh, constipation and enteritis. It had been sometimes used for whooping cough as an antispasmodic.

- Tulsi has antioxidant properties and reduces blood glucose levels. Thus it is useful for diabetics.
- Tulsi reduces total cholesterol levels. Thus it is useful for heart disease patients.
- Tulsi reduces blood pressure.
- Tulsi is also used to prepare herbal tea. It helps in building up stamina.
- It has been used for gastric disorders, cough, common colds, malaria, and headaches.
- It is used as mouth wash for reducing tooth ache.
- Tulsi oil shows larvicidal activity against malarial larva.
- It has immuno-modulatory properties.
- It contains phyto-chemicals which provide all these beneficial effects.
- Many herbal cosmetics contain tulsi. It is also used in skin ointments due to its anti-bacterial properties. Oil extracted from KarpooraTulsi is used in these preparations.
- Tulsi acts as insect repellent. So it is used to store grains.
- Recent research shows that tulsi does have analgesic (pain killer) properties similar to COX 2 inhibitor drugs.
- Ursolic acid, a chemical in tulsi may have a role as antifertility (contraceptive) agent in future.
- It has antiviral, antibacterial, antitubercular, antifungal, antimalarial properties.

Health benefits of Tulsi in our daily life:

- **Healing Power:** The tulsi plant has many medicinal properties. The leaves are a nerve tonic and also sharpen memory. They promote the removal of the catarrhal matter and phlegm from the bronchial tube. The leaves strengthen the stomach and induce copious perspiration. The seed of the plant are mucilaginous.
- **Fever and Common Cold:** The leaves of basil are specific for many fevers. During the rainy season, when malaria and dengue fever are widely prevalent, tender leaves, boiled with tea, act as preventive against these diseases. In case of acute fevers, a decoction of the leaves boiled with powdered cardamom in half a liter of water and mixed with sugar and milk brings down the temperature. The juice of tulsi leaves can be used to bring down fever. Extract of tulsi leaves in fresh water should be given every 2 to 3 hours. In between

one can keep giving sips of cold water. In children, it is every effective in bringing down the temperature.

- **Coughs:** Tulsi is an important constituent of many Ayurvedic cough syrups and expectorants. It helps to mobilize mucus in bronchitis and asthma. Chewing tulsi leaves relieves cold and flu.
- **Sore Throat:** Water boiled with basil leaves can be taken as drink in case of sore throat. This water can also be used as a gargle.
- **Respiratory Disorder:** The herb is useful in the treatment of respiratory system disorder. A decoction of the leaves, with honey and ginger is an effective remedy for bronchitis, asthma, influenza, cough and cold. A decoction of the leaves, cloves and common salt also gives immediate relief in case of influenza. They should be boiled in half a liter of water till only half the water is left and add then taken.
- **Kidney Stone:** Basil has strengthening effect on the kidney. In case of renal stone the juice of basil leaves and honey, if taken regularly for 6 months it will expel them via the urinary tract.
- **Heart Disorder:** Basil has a beneficial effect in cardiac disease and the weakness resulting from them. It reduces the level of blood cholesterol.
- **Children's Ailments:** Common pediatric problems like cough cold, fever, diarrhea and vomiting respond favorably to the juice of basil leaves. If pustules of chicken pox delay their appearance, basil leaves taken with saffron will hasten them.
- **Stress:** Basil leaves are regarded as an 'adaptogen' or anti-stress agent. Recent studies have shown that the leaves afford significant protection against stress. Even healthy persons can chew 12 leaves of basil, twice a day, to prevent stress. It purifies blood and helps prevent several common elements.
- **Mouth Infections:** The leaves are quite effective for the ulcer and infections in the mouth. A few leaves chewed will cure these conditions.
- **Insect Bites:** The herb is a prophylactic or preventive and curative for insect stings or bites. A teaspoonful of the juice of the leaves is taken and is repeated after a few hours. Fresh juice must also be applied to the affected parts. A paste of fresh roots is also effective in case of bites of insects and leeches.
- **Skin Disorders:** Applied locally, basil juice is beneficial in the treatment of ringworm and other skin diseases. It has also been tried successfully by some naturopaths in the treatment of leucoderma.
- **Teeth Disorder:** The herb is useful in teeth disorders. Its leaves, dried in the sun and powdered, can be used for brushing teeth. It can also be mixed with mustered oil to make a paste and used as toothpaste. This is very good for maintaining dental health, counteracting bad breath and for massaging the gums. It is also useful in pyorrhea and other teeth disorders.
- **Headaches:** Basil makes a good medicine for headache. A decoction of the leaves can be given for this disorder. Pounded leaves mixed with sandalwood paste can also be applied on the forehead for getting relief from heat, headache, and for providing coolness in general.

- **Eye Disorders:** Basil juice is an effective remedy for sore eyes and night-blindness, which is generally caused by deficiency of vitamin A. Two drops of black basil juice are put into the eyes daily at bedtime.

Conclusion-

All these medicinal ingredients makes tulsi a must have for longer and peaceful life. This small plant is certainly a very good source of medicinal properties. After in depth and rigorous research it has been proved and certified that it is safe to consume tulsi in any form. All these remedial properties are well accepted and honored by modern science. Tulsi is the herb that cures the mankind from all odds naturally in today's superficial not-so good lifestyle. It is considered as India's Queen of herbs. They are largely used in ayurvedic medicines. It has got medicinal properties as well as cosmetic properties. Tulsi is grown in almost all Indian homes. Water boiled with tulsi leaves is good for sore throat. It can also be gargled. Chewing tulsi leaves treats cold and flu. Tulsi leaf when eaten in the morning purifies blood. It can be used as tooth powder by drying its leaves and mixed with water.

References

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