



Niger Seed as a Nourishing and Therapeutic Agent

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Niger [*Guizotia abyssinica* (L.f.) Cass.] is commonly known as *ramtil*, *jagni* or *jatangi* (Hindi), *ramtal* (Gujrati), *karale* or *khurasani* (Marathi), *uhechellu* (Kannada), *payellu* (Tamil), *verrinuvvulu* (Telugu), *alashi* (Oriya), *sarguza* (Bengali), *ramtil* (Punjabi) and *sorguja* (Assamese) in different parts of the country. Niger although considered a minor oilseed crop, is important in terms of its 32 to 40% content of quality oil with 18 to 24% protein in the seed. Niger oil is slow drying, used in food, paint, soap, and as an illuminant. It is used as a substitute for olive oil, can be adulterated with rapeseed, sesame and linseed oil. The oil is used in cooking. The oil from the seed is used to treat burns and in the treatment of scabies. The seed is eaten fried and used as a condiment. The press cake from oil extraction is used for livestock feed. Niger oil has good keeping quality and has < 70% unsaturated fatty acids free from toxins. The oil is considered good for health. Whole plants are used as green manure in the pre flowering stage. Plants are used as a 'bee plant'. The crop is capable of giving better seed yield even under low soil fertility, moisture stress and poor crop management. Niger has an advantage of yielding oil and has good degree of tolerance to diseases, insect pests and attack of wild animals.

Niger seeds are nutritionally rich, providing a valuable source of energy, protein, and healthy fats. They also contain essential minerals, vitamins, and dietary fibre. The oil extracted from niger seeds is particularly noteworthy for its high content of unsaturated fatty acids, including linoleic acid, and is a good source of vitamin K and beta-carotene.

Niger seed oil has immense health benefit which are listed below

1. Heart Health:- Niger seed oil is quite beneficial to other typical vegetable oils to improve your cholesterol balance as this oil has high levels of omega-3 fatty acids and linoleic acid. This can help lower chances of developing atherosclerosis, which can further prevent heart attacks and strokes. The anti-inflammatory effects of these healthy fats can also help lower blood pressure and generally reduce the strain on your cardiovascular system.

2. Reduces Inflammation

Niger seed oil consists of a good amount of antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds reduces arthritis, gout, rheumatism, fever, or high blood pressure. Antioxidants help to neutralize free radicals, which can cause oxidative stress.

3. Heals Wounds

Niger essential oil is highly nutritious as it consists of vital nutrients like niacin, oleic acid, carbohydrates, protein, fibres, stearic acid, riboflavin, and ascorbic acids which possess good healing ability. Niger seed oil offers immediate relief from irritation caused due to wounds.

4. Immune System Booster

Niger seed oil consists of certain anti-parasitic and antioxidant qualities which reduces the skin infections and strengthen the overall immune system.

5. Good for Rheumatism

Niger seeds oil is quite beneficial for treating rheumatism and can give fast relief from it without causing any other side effects.

6. Sleep Aid

Niger seed oil is the storehouse of magnesium, potassium, and zinc which are some of the key minerals that can affect the hormonal levels in the body. These minerals help to calm circadian rhythms and induce the release of certain neurotransmitters that the body needs for proper rest, mainly magnesium.

7. Give Relief from Cold and Flu

Niger seeds oil is extremely beneficial in giving protection to the body against cold and flu. Regular massage of this oil extract on the chest, back, and other parts of the body gives relief against common symptoms of flu and cold.

8. Gastrointestinal Issues

Niger seed oil is quite comparable to rapeseed and sunflower oils, both of which can calm gastrointestinal problems like constipation, bloating, cramping, hemorrhoids, and general stomach upset. The oil can also help to coat the stomach and reduce inflammation, and also protect against any bad bacteria in the gut that may be compromising immune system or preventing proper nutrient uptake.

9. Curbs Morning Sickness

Niger seeds oil does have nonacidic stability that makes it healthy oil to curb morning sickness. This oil also consists of a lower amount of unsaturated fats therefore there lowers uncommon symptoms like mood swings, stress, and hypertension.

10. Speed Healing

Niger seed oil is loaded with mineral and vitamin composition which makes it ideal for stimulating the healing and regrowth of cells and tissues. Protein, fiber, riboflavin, vitamin C and other carbohydrates compressed in this oil are essential for the healing process, so including this to diet can do far more than help with cholesterol issues.

11. Protect the Skin

Antioxidants found in this oil help to encourage the healing process and calm inflammation in skin infections. They can prevent infections in the skin by increasing the immune reactivity at the site of wounds or lacerations. Antioxidants also neutralize free radicals, which can reduce the appearance of wrinkles and age spots.

Oil is used in cooking as a ghee substitute and can be used in salad dressings etc. Niger seeds are used as food in numerous dishes, condiments and snacks. Niger seed is prepared into chutneys, condiments as well as porridge, mixed with pulses to make snack foods and ground to produce flour and beverages.

