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Medicinal Plants and Herbs: A Review

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Abstract

Preliminary experimental animal researches have proved that the papaya seeds have potential contraceptive and abortifacient effect, but is non-teratogenic for the presence of phytochemicals in it. American Cancer Society recommends the centella herb for having anticancerous properties, but research in this regard is in progress.

Key-Words: Medicinal plants, Health, Traditional medicine

Introduction

Lime juice with a pinch of soda bicarb mixed in water improves indigestion and gastric upset due to severe acidity after heavy rich/ spicy meals. It can also be used as carminative in indigestion and sedation is produced by release of carbonic acid and gas. In chronic constipation by promoting biliary secretion from the liver, it improves intestinal motility. The acidic juice of lime facilitates the lipid and alcohol absorption and neutralizes excessive bile produced by the liver. The juice reduces gastric acidity by counteracting with the effects of greasy food. It is, therefore, useful in the treatment of peptic ulcers. Acidic juice of the fruit acts as curative for tonsillitis. Oral ingestion of lime juice mixed with salt in water provides relief from burning sensation and also stops bleeding in cystitis (inflammation of urinary bladder). It is also a recommended therapy in weight reduction and in obesity. During mornings at empty stomach, lime juice with honey in lukewarm water to be ingested for 2-3 months for effective weight reduction. ^[1]

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Limes are acidic in nature and serve as rich source of vitamin C, citric acid, sugar, certain minerals like calcium and phosphorus. Fresh lime juice possesses medicinal property which is well known from ancient ages in India. It is also called as sacred fruit in the *Vedas*. Sharangdhara and Charaka. The latter two famous physicians of ancient India had used the lime juice for alleviating orthopedic ailments therapeutically. The vitamin C as a primary component of the lime juice increases the resistance of individuals to several diseases, helps in wound healing and increases the health of eyes. It improves the maintenance of good dentition and keeps away toothache, dental caries, swollen gums, fragility of bones and bleeding of the gums. Lime is vital in the treatment of gastric disorders like indigestion, constipation and peptic ulcer. It stops the occurrence of indigestion, burning in the chest due to high acidity in the stomach, abrupt bilious vomiting and excessive accumulation of saliva in the mouth. ^[2]

Coconut water acts as a natural energy or sports drink, as it is rich in mineral content especially in potassium levels. Coconut water has a high demand among consumers for its nil fat content and low contents of carbohydrates, calories, and sodium. Coconut water serves as a potential healthy drink for adults and old persons as it has promising health utilities. Coconut milk has tremendous importance especially in Ayurvedic traditional medicinal purposes. It is generally used to maintain the electrolyte balance and to rule out dehydration losses. Also, it is used for treatment of ulcers in the mouth. Some recent studies have suggested that coconut milk has anti-microbial properties in the gastrointestinal tract, hyperlipidemic balancing qualities and useful for topical applications.

In addition, the coconut milk contains auric acid as saturated fat which has medicinal utilities in the cardiovascular system. [1]

Coconut water is considered to be sterile unless the fruit is damaged from an external source. There have been reports of coconut water used for intravenous administration where normal saline solution for medical purpose was unavailable in developing countries or on the war front. Coconut water is rich in mineral content with high potassium and anti-oxidant contents which has various medical utilities. Coconut water also contains cytokinin which is one of the beneficial components in it. Coconuts in which water to be used for drinking purpose are harvested from the coconut palms when they appear green in color. Coconuts sometimes due to natural calamities fell on the ground and they are susceptible to get damaged and get exposed for being damaged by insects or pests and animals. [3]

The plant derived and herbal growth promoters supplemented in the diet or added in the drinking water in the broiler and poultry birds have a promising biological effect on their growth performance, to reduce the pathogenic bacteriological load in different parts of digestive tract and to increase villus height in different segments of small intestine mainly in duodenum. The plant derived growth promoter enhance productive performance of the broiler in terms of body weight gain with minimum alteration of gut morphology and the possibility of bacterial invasion can be regulated.

Centella helps in the increase of hemoglobin in blood. It also promotes improvement in the venous system and encourages positive connective tissue growth. [4] Neem products are popular and predominantly in demand in Ayurveda for its antibacterial, antiviral, contraceptive, anthelmintic, antifungal, antidiabetic, and sedative properties. In Ayurvedic and Unani medicine it is recommended for skin diseases. Neem oil is also used for detoxification of blood, to balance blood sugar levels, healthy hair and to improve liver function. Neem leaves have been also been used to treat skin diseases like eczema, psoriasis, etc. [5]

Papaya fruit is a source of nutrients such as provitamin A carotenoids, vitamin C, folate and dietary fiber. Papaya skin, pulp and seeds also contain a variety of phytochemicals, including lycopene and polyphenols. [6]

Papaya is a good topical supplement for treatment of acne, skin infections and wounds. The flesh of papaya is rich in dietary fiber and thus helps in lowering blood cholesterol. It prevents premature ageing and in treatment of endoparasitic worms in gastrointestinal

tract. Papaya fruit aids in proper digestion and prevents constipation. It keeps colon infection away and helps in curing morning sickness and nausea. In addition, it contains anti-inflammatory enzymes which help in curing osteoporosis in elderly people and in alleviating joint arthritis. [6]

Neem leaf is used diseases of the heart and blood vessels (cardiovascular disease), fever, diabetes, gum disease (gingivitis), for leprosy, eye disorders, bloody nose, intestinal worms, stomach upset, loss of appetite, skin eczema, ulcers and hepatic disorders. [5] Papaya is also applied topically for the treatment of cuts, rashes, stings and burns. Papain, a notable protease remains present in papaya. It is believed that it can raise platelet levels in blood. Papaya may be used as a medicine for malaria and dengue fever for its antimalarial and antiplasmodial properties. The raw papaya and its leaf are also used for meat tenderizing for the papain content in the fruit. Centella is a plant which grows in tropical swampy areas. The stems of Centella are slender with creeping stolons, green to reddish-green in color, connecting plants to each other. It has long-stalked, green, reniform leaves with rounded apices which have smooth texture with palmately netted veins. The leaves are borne on pericladial petioles nearly 2 cm length. Centella grows in low lying wet areas along ditches. As the plant is aquatic in habitat, it is especially sensitive to pollutants in the water. [4,7]

In obese people, it acts as a weight reducer and in controlling body weight. Papaya helps in preventing menstrual cramps and helps in maintaining regular menstrual flow. Papaya is a rich source of Vitamins A and C and thus promotes immunity. [6]

Shampoos and soaps contain papaya extracts as it helps in preventing dandruff and hair fall. It helps in regulating the growth of cancerous cells in hepatic cancers and also prevents renal problems by inducing antioxidant and oxidative free radical scavenging.

Conclusion

More sufficient researches are in demand to be carried out to establish the medicinal facts of the mentioned indigenous plants and fruits. In infants, use of neem oil is fatal. Some disadvantages of neem includes miscarriages, abortions and infertility.

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