Germinated Fenugreek seeds have cholesterol lowering properties

The seeds of Fenugreek (Trigonella foenum-graecum) were first found to exhibit hypocholesterolaemic and hypoglycaemic effects in diabetic dogs and rats, by French and Indian researchers in 1983 (Vallette et al, 1984; Sharma, 1984). The fibrous portion of Fenugreek seeds was shown to be largely responsible for these effects.

The first human study to investigate these effects, involving 10 subjects with hyperlipidaemia, revealed a significant reduction in serum total cholesterol, LDL and VLDL cholesterol and triglyceride levels, but no effect on HDL levels after a 20 day treatment period (Sharma et al, 1991). The dosage used in this study, however, was a large 100 grams of defatted fenugreek powder per day. Needless to say, ingestion of such amounts is very difficult, making compliance a significant problem in practice.

A recent Indian study, however, suggests a simple but effective method to overcome this difficulty. Fenugreek seed was first germinated (sprouted) before drying and powdering, and a daily dose of 12.5gm or 18gm then given to 20 subjects with hypercholesterolaemia. Consumption over a one month period resulted in a hypocholesterolaemic effect at both dosage levels, although this was more significant in subjects taking the higher dose. Total cholesterol and LDL levels fell significantly, but no change was seen in levels of HDL, VLDL and triglycerides.

Distinct changes in the soluble fibre content of the seeds were shown to be produced as a result of germination, and these changes presumably enable lower total daily doses of Fenugreek seed to be clinically effective.

The germinated ‘sprouts’ of many seeds and pulses including Fenugreek, are a rich source of vitamins, minerals and protein, and can be a palatable addition to a healthy diet. Incorporation of sprouted Fenugreek seeds into the daily diet of those with hypercholesterolaemia (eg as part of a salad, or as a juice) may be a simple and cheap way for some patients to avoid the need to take expensive and somewhat suspect lipid-lowering drugs.

Refs:


Aphrodisiacal effects of Damiana

The leaves of the South American plant Damiana (Turnera diffusa), as well as the root of the Brazilian plant Pfaffia paniculata (Brazilian ginseng), have a reputation as aphrodisiacs, particularly in men (Berger, 1950; Martinez, 1959). Substantiated written or scientific evidence of such effects however, has been lacking to date, and the validity of these reputed effects has been challenged by various authors (Tyler et al, 1988).

Italian researchers investigated the effects of liquid extracts of these two plants on sexual behaviour of male rats. While having no effect on the copulatory behaviour of sexually potent rats, both plant extracts, either singly or in combination, improved the copulatory performance of sexually sluggish/impotent rats. Doses used were equivalent to a rather high 1ml/kg of a 1:1 strength liquid extract, as well as a combination of 0.5ml/kg of each extract. These but not lower doses increased the percentage of rats achieving ejaculation, and significantly reduced mount and ejaculation latencies, post-ejaculatory interval and intercopulatory interval. Neither extract affected locomotor activity.