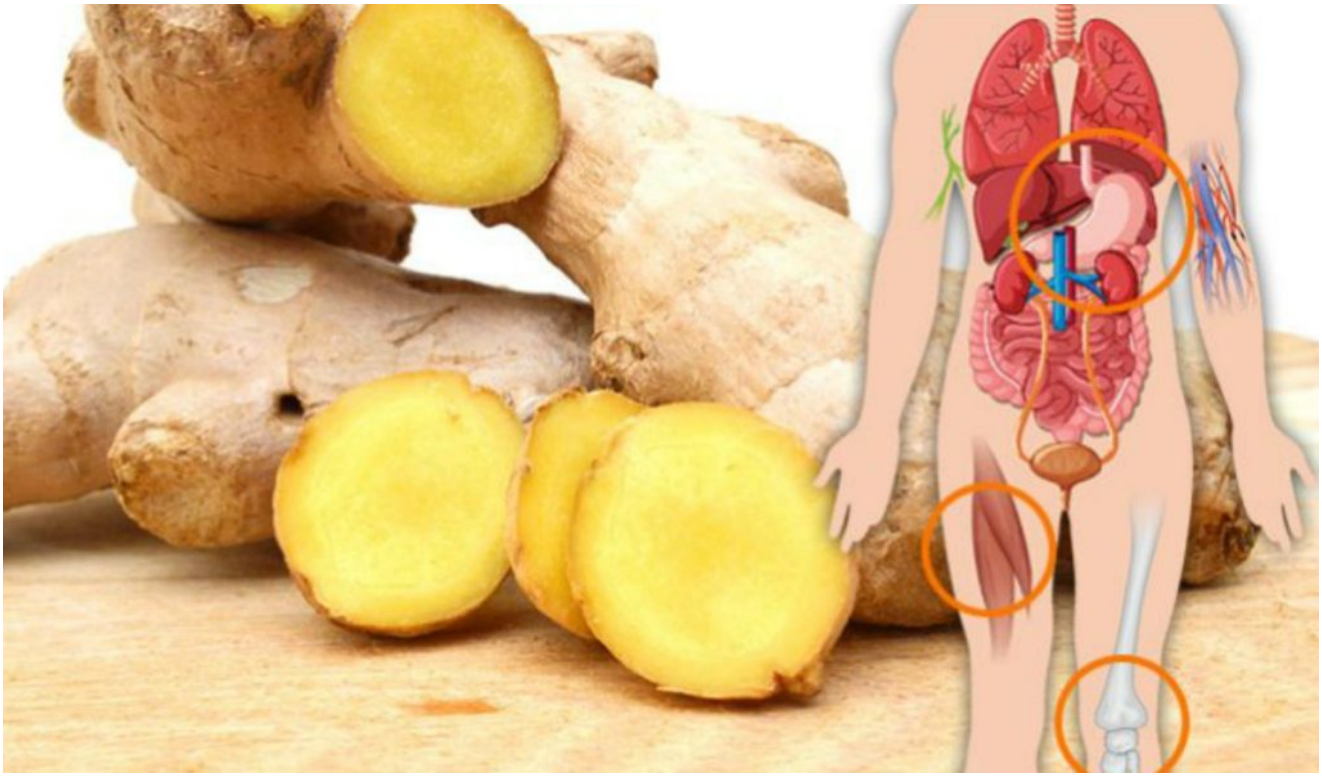
PLANTS & HERBS

Here Is What Happens To Your Body When You Eat Ginger

By bestfolkmedicine · 09/08/2018 · 5 min read



Ginger is far more than just a spicy garnish or warming herb—it's a botanical powerhouse whose effects ripple through digestion, immunity, metabolism, inflammation, and more. Whether consumed fresh, powdered, in tea, or as a supplement, ginger's bioactive compounds trigger a cascade of changes in your body. Let's explore what science currently reveals about how your body responds when you eat ginger.

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1. You Activate Bioactive Compounds: Gingerol, Shogaol & Friends

When you eat ginger, you introduce dozens of phytochemicals into your system. The most studied are **gingerols** (especially 6-gingerol) and **shogaols** (formed when ginger is dried or cooked), along with zingerone, paradols, volatile oils, and terpenes.

- **Fresh ginger** is rich in gingerols.
- **Drying or heating** partially converts gingerol into **shogaols**, which are often more pungent and may have stronger biological activity.

These compounds are believed to drive many of ginger's health effects.

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2. Digestion Speeds Up — Food Moves Through More Smoothly

One of the earliest effects is on digestion. Ginger helps food move more efficiently through the digestive system:

- It increases **gastric motility**, meaning the stomach empties more quickly.
- It reduces **bloating, gas, and indigestion**, likely by helping break up gas and reducing gut stasis.
- By speeding up transit, it can prevent food from lingering too long in the stomach, which helps with feelings of heaviness or fullness.

For people with **functional dyspepsia**, some trials show ginger supplements reduced abdominal discomfort, nausea, bloating, belching, and heartburn.

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3. You Calm Inflammation & Oxidative Stress

Ginger exerts strong **anti-inflammatory** and **antioxidant** effects in many tissues:

- Its compounds inhibit pathways like **NF- B** (a master regulator of inflammation) and reduce pro-inflammatory cytokines.
- It neutralizes free radicals and reduces markers of oxidative stress (like malondialdehyde) in lab and animal studies.

- In autoimmune and inflammatory models, ginger may help tamp down overactive immune responses. A recent study looked at how ginger supplementation modulated neutrophil activity (important in inflammatory disease) and **NETosis** (a kind of immune cell response) in autoimmunity.

While human evidence is promising, results are still a bit inconsistent depending on dose, duration, and population groups.

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4. You May Feel Less Nauseous — Ginger Eases Queasiness

Perhaps the most well-established effect in humans: **ginger relieves nausea** across multiple contexts:

- **Pregnancy (morning sickness):** Multiple trials show 1 g of ginger daily can significantly reduce nausea and vomiting in early pregnancy vs. placebo.
- **Chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting (CINV):** Clinical trials show ginger added to standard care may reduce symptom severity.
- **Motion sickness and postoperative nausea:** Some evidence supports ginger's benefit, though effects vary.

The mechanism likely involves modulation of serotonin receptors in the gut and central nervous system, improving gastric motility and reducing signals that trigger nausea.

5. You Might Feel a Boost in Circulation & Heart Health

Ginger's benefits aren't limited to digestion — the root can also nudge cardiovascular health:

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- Animal and small human trials suggest it **lowers blood pressure**, lowers **LDL ("bad") cholesterol**, and raises **HDL ("good") cholesterol**.
- In high-fat diet animal models, ginger supplementation improved lipid profiles and boosted HDL via mechanisms in the liver.

- As an antioxidant and anti-inflammatory agent, ginger helps protect blood vessel walls from oxidative damage and inflammation — factors in atherosclerosis.

Though promising, larger, well-controlled human trials are needed to confirm how powerful ginger's cardiovascular effects are for people at risk.

6. You May See Improvements in Blood Sugar & Metabolism

Emerging research suggests ginger may help with **blood sugar regulation** and metabolic health:

- Some human studies show **fasting blood glucose** and insulin resistance improve with daily ginger supplementation (e.g. 2 g per day for 12 weeks).
- Animal models show ginger compounds promote glucose uptake in cells, lower fasting glucose, and increase glucose tolerance.
- Ginger's anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects may help reduce the chronic inflammation that underlies metabolic syndrome.

However, while the early data is encouraging, ginger shouldn't replace medications for diabetes — but can be one supportive tool in a broader lifestyle strategy.

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7. You Might Alleviate Muscular Soreness & Pain

In some studies, consuming ginger led to reduced **muscle pain and soreness** after intense exercise:

- One trial used 4 g of ginger for 5 days and found the onset of muscle pain was delayed vs. placebo.
- For **arthritis** (especially osteoarthritis), meta-analyses suggest modest improvements in pain and function with ginger extracts (dosages typically in the 500 mg–2,000 mg range).

Ginger may help by lowering cytokines and mediators of pain via its anti-inflammatory action.

8. You Get Some Microbial Defense — Antimicrobial & Antiviral Support

Ginger exhibits **antimicrobial** and **antiviral** effects in laboratory and preliminary studies:

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- It can inhibit growth of certain bacteria and fungi in vitro, acting as part of digestive and immune support.
- It may help reduce upper respiratory discomfort or infections via immune modulation, though human evidence is mild.

These effects are not strong enough to replace antibiotics or antivirals, but may complement a healthy immune system.

9. Potential Risks & Side Effects — What to Watch Out For

Ginger is generally considered **safe** in culinary or moderate supplemental amounts, but possible side effects and interactions do exist. **trointestinal upset**: heartburn, gas, constipation or diarrhea in sensitive individuals.

- **Allergic reactions**: rare skin or respiratory allergic responses.
- **Bleeding risk**: ginger may amplify effects of anticoagulant or antiplatelet drugs (e.g. warfarin, aspirin) — caution is advised.
- **Lower blood sugar & blood pressure**: In people already on medications, ginger could potentiate those effects too much.

As a general guideline, many trials use **1,000 to 2,000 mg (1–2 g) per day** of ginger extract. Higher doses (e.g. > 4 g per day) may increase side effects risk.

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Always discuss any ginger supplementation with your healthcare provider if you're pregnant, have bleeding disorders, diabetes, or cardiovascular conditions.

How to Incorporate Ginger Into Your Daily Routine

Here are safe, practical ways to get the benefits of ginger:

- **Grated fresh ginger** in teas, stir-fries, soups, smoothies
- **Ginger tea or infusion** (slice 1–2 cm fresh root in hot water)
- **Powdered ginger** sprinkled on oatmeal, yogurt, or baked goods
- **Ginger shots** (concentrated fresh juice + water, lemon) (moderate use)

- **Standardized ginger supplements** — choose high-quality, third-party tested products

Start with small amounts (½ to 1 gram per day) and increase gradually, observing how your body responds.

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Bottom Line

When you eat ginger, your body engages multiple beneficial responses:

- Faster digestion and relief from bloating
- Anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and immune-modulating effects
- Reduction in nausea
- Cardiovascular support (lipids, blood pressure)
- Better blood sugar handling
- Less muscle soreness
- Mild antimicrobial contributions

Sources:

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