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MEDICINAL USES OF TULSI

Tulsi has innumerable medicinal applications ranging from treating mundane coughs and colds effectively to rendering poisoning inactive.



The tulsi plant or Indian basil occupies an important place in the Hindu religion. The name 'tulsi' connotes "the incomparable one". Tulsi is a venerated plant and Hindus worship it in the morning and evening. The plant grows in the wild in the tropics and other warm regions. Dark or Shyama tulsi and light or Rama tulsi are the two main varieties, with the

former possessing greater medicinal value. Of the many varieties, the Krishna or Shyama tulsi is also commonly used for worship.

Traditionally, a Hindu household was considered incomplete if it didn't have a tulsi plant in the courtyard. Many families grow the plant in a specially built structure, which has images of deities installed on all four sides, and an alcove for a small earthen oil lamp. Some households

even have up to a dozen tulsi plants on the verandah or in the garden, forming a 'tulsi-van' or 'tulsivrindavan'—a miniature basil forest.

Medicinal uses of Tulsi

Fever and common cold. Tender leaves of the tulsi plant, boiled with tea, prevent cold during the rainy season, and malaria and dengue fever.

Leaves boiled with powdered cardamom in half a litre of water and mixed with sugar and milk help to bring down the temperature during a fever.

Sore throat. Water boiled with tulsi leaves can be consumed to help cure a sore throat. This water can also be used to gargle.

Respiratory disorders. A decoction of the leaves along with honey and ginger is an effective remedy for bronchitis, asthma, influenza, cough and cold.

A decoction of the leaves, cloves and common salt should be boiled in half a litre of water until only half the water is left. Drinking this can give immediate relief in case of influenza.

Kidney stones. The juice of tulsi leaves and honey, if taken regularly for six months, will break down, dislodge and expel the stones via the urinary tract.

Heart disorders. Chewing 10-12 leaves of tulsi daily reduces the level of blood cholesterol.

If there is a whistling sound heard from the lungs because of the accumulation of phlegm, milk in which tulsi leaves have been boiled, should be given.

Stress. Chewing 12 leaves of basil twice a day prevents stress.

Mouth infections. The leaves are quite effective in treating ulcers and infections in the mouth. A few leaves chewed regularly will cure these conditions.

Insect bites. A teaspoonful of the juice of the leaves can be taken every few hours in case of an insect bite. Fresh tulsi leaf juice must also be applied to the affected parts. A paste of the fresh roots of the plant is also effective in case of leeches.

Tooth problems. Leaves dried in the sun and powdered can be used for brushing the teeth. Leaves dried and mixed with mustard oil are used as toothpaste. This paste is very good for maintaining the overall dental health, countering bad breath and massaging the gums. The paste is also useful in treating pyorrhoea and other tooth disorders.

Headaches. Dried and powdered leaves are mixed with sandalwood paste and applied on the forehead to get relief from the heat and headaches.

Eye disorders. Tulsi juice is an effective remedy for sore eyes and night-blindness, which is generally caused by a deficiency of vitamin A. Two drops of black basil juice can be put into the eyes daily at bedtime.

Women's diseases cured by tulsi

1. Two grams of the gum of a neem tree, ajwain seeds, tamal patra, and five equal parts of the tulsi plant are ground into powder,

boiled in 100 gm of water until only one-fourth of the water remains. The extract is cooled and strained to treat excessive menstrual bleeding.

2. Applying the paste of tulsi over the abdomen and the breasts of a pregnant woman relieves itching of the skin.

3. Application of oil prepared with 125 gm of tulsi leaves in 500 gm of sesame oil previously subjected to the process of 'moorchhana,' relieves the pains associated with confinement.

4. Tulsi seeds soaked overnight for twelve hours in water, and then crushed well and administered with sugar relieve post-delivery pains.

5. Consuming a mixture of 20 gm of tulsi juice, 20 gm of the juice of maize leaves, 10 gm of the juice or extract of *ashwagandha*, and 10 gm of honey, for seven days following delivery, improves lactation.

6. 20 gm of tulsi juice with rice water can completely cure leucorrhoea, but during the treatment, consuming rice and milk or rice and ghee is restricted.

7. Regular use of the powdered roots of tulsi wrapped in betel leaves stops the bleeding of the internal lining of the stomach.

8. Tulsi makes the uterus healthy and strong.

9. Regular period cycles can be restored by taking 125 gm of ground tulsi seeds, black sesame seeds, tender shoots of the cotton plant, tender shoots of bamboo plants and 220 gm of aged jaggery, mixed with the powder.

10. Drinking tulsi juice will lessen the severity of labour pains.

Men's diseases cured by tulsi

1. For urination problems, tulsi juice is added to double the quantity of grape juice, sugarcane juice or coconut milk and consumed.

2. To prevent nocturnal emissions, soak 10 gm of tulsi seeds overnight in water in an earthen pot. Grind them well in the morning together with 15 almond kernels and 16 small cardamoms. Add sugar as required and drink the mixture. Chewing small pieces of tulsi roots with betel leaves also solves this problem.

3. Prepare a smooth paste by grinding tulsi seeds with a little water. Boil the paste with twice the amount of *neem* oil until it turns black. Apply the oil on the sores caused by syphilis and other wounds.

4. Consultations with certified ayurvedic doctors reveal that tulsi plays an important role in the medicines prepared to treat impotence, gonorrhoea, thinness of seminal fluid, dysuria and allied diseases.

5. Tulsi seeds ground with cumin seeds and sugar, taken with milk, help relieve pains caused by stones in the bladder and the burning sensation while passing urine.

6. Powdered Shyama tulsi mixed with lemon juice, if taken regularly, cures all abnormalities of the urinary system.

Children's diseases cured by tulsi

1. Two grams of tulsi juice taken three to four times a day prevents all types of sickness in children.

2. In case of fever caused by a cold, tulsi juice should be smeared on the chest and forehead. The child should be made to inhale the vapours emanating from the juice, and should also be given a teaspoonful of the juice with half a teaspoonful of honey.

3. The ayurvedic treatment for worms includes a healthy dose of tulsi, apart from other natural ingredients.

4. Cough can also be cured by letting the child lick tulsi juice mixed with *jethi madh* (yashti madhu) juice.

5. A mixture of tulsi leaf juice and *kasondara* leaf juice is also a good remedy for cough.

6. Boil 10 gm of tulsi leaves, 10 gm of methi seeds and 5 gm of kadu twigs in 50 gm of water until only one-fourth of the water remains. Cool and strain. This is beneficial in treating fevers preceded by cold rigours, such as malaria.

7. If the abdomen of a baby is distended due to the accumulation of gas, the condition can be relieved by giving him 5-10 gm of tulsi juice, the exact amount given depending on the age of the baby.

8. In cases of diarrhoea accompanying teething, powdered tulsi leaves should be given to the child with pomegranate syrup.

9. In coughs caused by excessive phlegm, the juice of Shyama tulsi mixed with honey will help. This mixture is of great value in treating children with a tendency to vomit frequently.

10. In case a baby is suffering from colic, a little powdered dry ginger with tulsi leaf juice will give him relief.

11. Massaging the gums with tulsi leaf juice mixed with honey will help the baby cut teeth easily, without the usual troubles associated with teething.

12. Five to ten drops of tulsi leaf juice given with water every day will strengthen the muscles and bones of the infant.

13. Influenza can be cured by regular administration of 30 to 60 drops of a mixture of 15 gm of tulsi leaf juice, 15 gm of honey, 5 gm of ginger juice and 5 gm of powdered *ajwain* seeds.

Snake poison can be deactivated by administering every two hours a mixture obtained by crushing together 20 leaves of a tulsi plant with ten black pepper seeds.

14. Heat 200 gm of tulsi leaf juice with 125 gm of water. Let the liquid simmer for one hour on a low flame. Prepare a thick syrup of 500 gm of sugar, and stir the mixture into the syrup. Administering 3-5 gm of this preparation to a child cures fever, cough and shortness of breath.

15. If there is a whistling sound heard from the lungs because of the accumulation of phlegm, milk in which tulsi leaves have been boiled, should be given.

16. The extract of tulsi roots sweetened with sugar will relieve constipation and distension of the stomach, ensuring satisfactory bowel movement.

17. 10 gm of tulsi leaves and 10 gm of pepper should be ground together and rolled into small pills. Three or four of these pills should be given to a child every day to cure coughs, including whooping cough.

18. Powdered bark of tulsi roots given with honey helps an obese child to shed some of the fat.

19. Extract of tulsi is an effective remedy for liver disorders in children.

Treatment for poisoning

In case of poisoning, the maximum possible amount of tulsi juice must be taken.

If opium or any other poisonous material like datura or aconite has been inadvertently imbibed, give the patient a paste of tulsi leaves mixed with ghee obtained from cow's milk in the ratio of 100:500. If no improvement is noticed even after this treatment, a similar quantity of the mixture should be administered at intervals, till the effects of the poi-

son disappear. (Of course, in cases of poisoning, it is best that a certified doctor is informed first.)

Administering 50 gm of tulsi juice every day will eliminate the effects of calomel (hartal) poisoning in a week.

It is believed that the poison spreading from the bite of a snake can be rendered inactive by administering tulsi leaf juice to the victim, dropping a little juice into the eyes and ears, and applying a paste obtained by crushing and grinding the roots of the plant at the location of the bite. Snake poison can also be deactivated by administering every two hours a mixture obtained by crushing together 20 leaves of a tulsi plant with ten black pepper seeds.

If bitten by a snake, it is believed that one should drink the juice obtained by crushing and grinding tulsi, *jatamansi*, saffron, turmeric, red sandalwood, pure *manashil*, *nakhi*, *tarnal patra*, cinnamon and *tagar* with sufficient water. The juice should also be dropped into the nose and the eyes. This will destroy the poison, and the swelling caused by the poison will subside.

The pain caused by the sting of a wasp can be relieved by drinking and applying tulsi juice. The poison in a mosquito sting is also destroyed by the application of tulsi juice.

If your cot is infested with bed bugs, place a few twigs of the wild variety of tulsi on it. The bugs will quickly disperse. Mosquitoes, too, will not approach the cot.

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