

From our friends at "Back to Herbs"



Kelp

Kelps are large seaweeds (algae) belonging to the Brown algae (Phaeophyceae) in the order Laminariales.

Kelp is called a "miracle plant" because of its numerous therapeutic properties. Kelp is the best natural source of trace minerals. It is also a good source of protein and a rich source of iodine and iron, iodine is important for the proper functioning of thyroid and iron is important for blood cell function. A measurable amount vitamin C also accompanies the iron found in sea vegetables. Since vitamin C acts to increase the bioavailability of plant iron, this combination in sea vegetables may offer a special benefit.

Additionally:

- Kelps correct mineral deficiencies.
- A good protective food because it is the richest source of iodine, it is also valuable in overcoming poor digestion, and for rebuilding and maintaining the proper function of all glands.
- Reported to aid in brain development.
- Offsets deficiencies of an inferior diet.
- Kelp helps prevent osteoporosis.
- Beneficial for those suffering from impotence, anemia and emaciation.
- Helps to detoxify the body.
- Helps to increase metabolism.
- May help in controlling weight because it dissolves fatty wastes through the skin.

Sea vegetables offer one of the broadest ranges of minerals of any food, containing virtually all the minerals found in the ocean - and not surprisingly, many of same minerals found in human blood. They also offer a variety of unique phytonutrients, including their sulfated polysaccharides (also called fucoidans). Unlike some other categories of vegetables, sea vegetables do not appear to depend on carotenoids and flavonoids for their antioxidant benefits, because in addition to these two important categories of antioxidants, sea vegetables contain several other types, including alkaloid antioxidants. Sea vegetables are an excellent source of iodine and vitamin K, a very good source of the B-vitamin folate, and magnesium, and a good source of iron and calcium, and the B-vitamins riboflavin and pantothenic acid. They also contain measurable amounts of vitamins C and E.



IODINE

Brown algae, including the commonly eaten sea vegetables kombu/kelp, wakame, and arame may be unique among the sea vegetables in their iodine content. Some species from the brown algae genus *Laminaria* are able to accumulate iodine in up to 30,000 times more concentrated a form than sea water. Because of its high concentration of iodine, brown kelp (*Laminaria*) has been used to treat goiter, an enlargement of the thyroid gland caused by a lack of iodine, since medieval times.

THYROID

For some health conditions - like hypothyroidism, in which the cells of the thyroid make too little thyroid hormone - increased iodine intake can provide important health benefits. Symptoms of thyroid problem affect many people. In fact, about 13 million Americans experience one or more of the symptoms of a problem with the thyroid.

The thyroid gland is a butterfly shaped gland, located at the front part of the throat just below the Adam's apple. It produces hormones that affect and regulate virtually every bodily activity. Thyroid hormones control metabolism and organ function, directly affecting weight loss or gain, energy levels, skin condition, heart rate, cholesterol levels, menstrual regularity and memory as well as many other functions.

Symptoms of hypothyroidism - a disorder that occurs when the thyroid system is underactive- include fatigue, weight gain, depression, irregular periods, hair loss, and more. Many of these symptoms are also common symptoms of menopause or perimenopause, and may be mistaken as such. Likewise, women with a known thyroid problem may not realize that perimenopause or menopause is contributing to their symptoms.

When the thyroid gland produces too much thyroid hormone, this condition is called hyperthyroidism, often referred to as an overactive thyroid. Some of the most common symptoms of thyroid problems related to hyperthyroidism are: fatigue and weakness, heat intolerance, dry and coarse skin, clammy skin, hair loss, weight loss, light menstrual periods, and frequent defecation.



Because there are so many different health problems associated with either an underactive or overactive thyroid gland, it is essential that basic thyroid function be tested. The easiest way to do this is by testing for TSH (thyroid stimulating hormone).

Of special note in the area of cancer and sea vegetables is the issue of estrogen-related cancers, especially breast cancer. Intake of sea vegetables appears able to modify various aspects of a woman's normal menstrual cycle in such a way that over long periods of time (tens of years) the total cumulative estrogen secretion that occurs during the follicular phase of the cycle gets reduced. Since overproduction of estrogen can play a role in the risk of breast cancer for women, sea vegetables may offer unique benefits in this regard. It's also important to note that cholesterol is required as a building block for production of estrogen, and intake of sea vegetables has repeatedly been shown to lower blood levels of

total cholesterol and LDL-cholesterol.

To understand many of the anti-inflammatory, anti-cancer, anticoagulant, antithrombotic, and antiviral properties of sea vegetables, you need to look no further than their sulfated polysaccharides. These unique compounds (also called fucoidans) are starch-like molecules that are unusual in their complexity. Unlike many other types of polysaccharides, the fucoidans contain many chemical "branch points," and they also contain sulfur atoms. Multiple studies show anti-inflammatory benefits from consumption of the sulfated polysaccharides in sea vegetables. Interest in this aspect of sea vegetable intake and anti-inflammatory benefits has received special focus in the area of osteoarthritis.

The vanadium content of sea vegetables is an area of special interest with respect to their mineral content. While research in this area remain inconclusive, sea vegetables may be able to help increase cells' sensitivity to insulin, helping to prevent overproduction of glucose by cells, and help take existing blood sugars and convert them into storable starches. All of these factors would help control blood sugar levels, and lower risk of type 2 diabetes.

The antioxidant content of sea vegetables also deserves mention with respect to its health benefits. While sea vegetables do contain measurable amounts of polyphenols like carotenoids and flavonoids, they also contain other phytonutrient antioxidants, including several types of alkaloids that have been shown to possess antioxidant properties. Coupled with measurable amounts of antioxidant vitamins (like vitamins C and E) and antioxidant minerals (like manganese and zinc), sea vegetables can be expected to help reduce the risk of unwanted oxidative stress and many types of cardiovascular problems that are associated with poor antioxidant intake.

As an added bonus, in 2010 a group of researchers in the University of Newcastle found that a fibrous material called alginate in sea kelp was better at preventing fat absorption than most over-the-counter slimming treatments in laboratory trials. As a food additive it may be used to reduce fat absorption and thus obesity.



Be sure to try NSP's Kelp (100 caps), Super Supplemental Vit. & Min. (120 tabs) or Thyroid Activator® (100 caps). Click here for a list of NSP's Kelp-related products.

References:

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Yours in Good Health!

Sincerely,

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