

From our friends at "Back to Herbs"



eFlash



## Psyllium Hulls

Psyllium hulls or psyllium husk comes from the crushed seeds of the *Plantago ovata* plant, an herb native to parts of Asia, the Mediterranean and North Africa. Similar to oats and wheat, psyllium is rich in soluble fiber. Traditionally, psyllium husk is used as a gentle bulk-forming laxative for constipation. Its ingredients include alkaloids, amino acids, oils, protein, tannins, flavonoids, and a variety of sugars and carbohydrates.



Studies suggest that a high-fiber diet, which may include psyllium, can lower insulin and blood sugar levels and improve cholesterol and triglyceride levels in people with diabetes.

Psyllium has long been recognized for its potential role in reducing blood cholesterol. In 1998, the FDA approved a health claim on psyllium: 3 to 12 grams of soluble fiber from psyllium seed husk when included as part of a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease. Studies have shown that psyllium husk is effective in lowering total cholesterol and low-density lipoprotein or LDL (the bad cholesterol) levels. Studies also found that a 1% reduction in total and LDL cholesterol can reduce the risk of heart disease by up to 20%.

Psyllium hulls have many other health benefits.

Since psyllium husk provides fiber, it can alleviate constipation. In addition, recent studies also showed positive benefits of psyllium husk in IBD (Crohn's Disease and Colitis) and IBS. Studies have concluded that psyllium relieves constipation as it is believed to speed the passage of stool through the digestive tract by softening the stool and attracting water thereby producing more bulk (which stimulates the transit of waste through the gastrointestinal tract).

Psyllium can be used as a bulk-forming agent to relieve mild to moderate diarrhea. When psyllium husk comes in contact with water, it swells and forms a gelatinous mass that stimulates the transport of waste through the intestinal tract. It is considered a good intestinal cleanser in that it speeds waste matter through the digestive system. In preparation for a colonoscopy procedure it helps to cleanse the colon. It soaks up a significant amount of water in the digestive tract, thereby making stool firmer and, under these circumstances, slower to pass. In other words, Psyllium acts to slow down a too rapid transit time. It appears to stabilize bowel movements and is often used in cases of alternating constipation and diarrhea and reduce the pain associated with hemorrhoids and anal fissures.

Psyllium also has the additional advantages over other sources of fiber by reducing flatulence and bloating. In a study of people with ulcerative colitis (a type of inflammatory bowel disorder), psyllium seeds were as effective as the prescription drug mesalamine in decreasing recurrences of the disease. Psyllium hulls are effective relief for stomach and intestinal ulcers.

One of the great health benefits of psyllium is the fact that it binds to cholesterol (and potentially toxic

substances) as it passes through the gastro-intestinal tract. By binding to toxic substances in the gut, it can prevent these compounds from being absorbed into the body or reacting with the walls of the intestines. Ridding the colon of toxic substances, including heavy metals it acts almost as a sponge to soak them off the walls of the intestine. This may reduce the risk of developing colon cancer.

Psyllium encourages the growth of healthful, "friendly" intestinal bacteria such as Lactobacillus acidophilus and bifidobacteria, which are helpful in regulating bowel movements. In addition, psyllium husk can act as a prebiotic aiding to heal the inner lining of inflamed intestines.

**Weight Loss.** Studies and clinical reports suggest that psyllium may enhance the sensation of fullness and reduce hunger cravings. For these reasons, incorporating psyllium into the diet may aid weight loss. Psyllium husks slow down the absorption rate of carbohydrates. Since it slows down the absorption rate of any carbohydrates consumed with them, the glycemic index of the carbohydrate-containing food is lowered significantly, which means it helps to keep blood sugar levels stable, keep insulin low, and therefore assist weight loss. Psyllium husks add more 'bulk' to the meal. By adding more 'bulk' to a meal, it creates a feeling of fullness for longer after consuming the meal.

Psyllium husk also helps to eliminate the fecal matter from your body on consumption, resulting in weight loss. The size of the stomach decreases after the removal of fecal matter from your body. Also, an individual acquires a lighter feeling body. Mainly, it helps in natural bodily waste removal, which in turn enhances colon condition and increases body metabolism. In order to lose weight fast, doctors may prescribe psyllium husk supplement.

Psyllium seed husks have been used in herbal remedies including topically for treating skin irritations includes poison ivy reactions and insect bites and stings. It has also been used in Chinese and Indian traditional herbal systems to treat bladder problems and high blood pressure.

In general, prescription drugs should be taken 1 hour before or 2-4 hours after psyllium, because the absorption and effectiveness of many drugs may be reduced. Psyllium should always be taken with (at least) a full 8-oz glass of water. It is also important to drink at least 6 to 8 full glasses of water throughout the day or constipation may develop. Taking psyllium supplements without adequate liquids may cause it to swell, and, in extreme causes, cause choking. Do not take this product if you have difficulty swallowing. People with esophageal stricture (narrowing of the esophagus) or any other narrowing or obstruction of the gastrointestinal tract should not take psyllium. Do not give psyllium to a child. For those not accustomed to taking psyllium, it is best to begin with a low dose (such as 1/2 tsp. in an 8 oz glass of water once a day), then increase to 2 tsp. in two 8 oz glasses of water per day, as needed. Higher doses of psyllium may be recommended by a health care provider to treat certain conditions. As a weight-loss aid, take at least 30 minutes before meals.



Be sure to try NSP's Psyllium Husks Combination (11 oz), LBS II® (100 caps), or Psyllium Husks (100 caps).

## References:

<http://www.earthclinic.com/Remedies/psyllium.html>  
<http://www.healthcastle.com/psyllium-cholesterol.shtml>  
<http://www.quick-weight-loss-principles.com/psyllium-husks.html>

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**Yours in Good Health!**

Sincerely,

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