

# Irish Moss



**Irish Moss** soothes mucous membranes and alleviates respiratory ailments, such as bronchitis, dry cough and other lung problems. Like many other bountiful nutrients from the ocean, Irish Moss is a *wonderful tonic* for maintaining youthful and clear skin and promoting a healthy glow. You may also find it *helpful in a weight loss program*.

**Information:** Herbs/Nutritionals/Medicinals can be very strong. Consequently, if they are not tailored to your specific needs, they can do more harm than good. This information is meant to be used by your VHC Medical Team and personal Physician as they build your Total Health Plan. Never attempt to adjust your prescribed medications and/or Natural Treatments without your physician's and Medical Team's knowledge and guidance. Since herbs/nutritionals and medications can interact with each other, it is always advisable to consult with your health care provider and The Vibrant Health Community at [www.VibrantHealthCommunity.com](http://www.VibrantHealthCommunity.com) (or call 1-866-378-8253) before starting or changing your program.

**Botanical:** *Chondrus crispus*

**Family:** *Gigartinaceae* (carrageen) - *Algae* (algae)

**Other common names:** Pearl Moss, Carrageenan, Red Seaweed, Chondrus, Carrahan, Carrageen, Carrageenin

**History:** Irish Moss is a curly, red-purple to yellow-green, cartilaginous alga that appears at low tide on all the shores of the North Atlantic and comes from a genus of about fifteen species of marine algae. It is a perennial thallophyte with a height and spread from three to twelve inches and a disc-shaped holdfast. The plants are collected wild, growing on rocks and stones in pools and shallow saltwater and may be harvested by boat, using a rake (causing minimal damage to the holdfasts) and by hand from the submerged rocks. During the potato famine of the mid-nineteenth century, thousands of beleaguered Irish saved themselves from starvation by eating the humble, bushy seaweed known as Irish Moss. Like all gifts from the sea, Irish Moss is highly nutritive and carries all the positive qualities and rich elements that the oceans possess. One of its common names, Carrageen, is derived from a village in southeastern Ireland where the seaweed is plentiful. It is also found clinging to submerged rocks along the shorelines of Canada, New England, the British Isles and Europe as far south as Portugal. Irish immigrants who found it growing in Canada and on the New England shores were the first to harvest and use it in America, and thus Irish Moss has been an important edible seaweed on both sides of the Atlantic. The entire plant, which is dried and then

soaked to swell back to its original bulk, with the liquid turning into a jelly, is used medicinally and for culinary purposes. It is commonly employed as a filler and stretcher of other foods and is eaten as is, or as a thickener for soups and stews. It also makes a tasty, white pudding with sugar. Irish Moss is a mucilaginous, sweet, salty herb that has a softening and soothing effect on tissues. Used commercially, it is included in cosmetics as an emollient or skin softener in creams and lotions, because of its moisture absorbing qualities, and as a rinse for dry hair. Irish Moss is a stabilizing agent for the food industry in dairy products, desserts, salad dressings and sauces. It is used in the pharmaceutical industry to stabilize cod liver oil and toothpaste, and has a wide variety of other commercial uses in the textile, leather, brewing, printing (as ink) and paint industries. Irish Moss provides a high mucilage content, sulfur compounds, protein, iodine, bromine, beta-carotene, calcium, iron, magnesium, manganese, phosphorus, potassium, selenium, zinc, gel-forming polysaccharides (known as carrageenans), pectin, B-vitamins and vitamin C.

**Beneficial Uses:** Irish Moss is a demulcent that has a soothing effect on virtually all the mucous membranes throughout the body. This sweet, salty,

mucilaginous herb has a softening effect on tissues and helps many respiratory problems including bronchitis and pneumonia. It is especially effective for pulmonary (lung) complaints with its ability to absorb liquid and eliminate it from the body. As an expectorant, it relieves dry, unproductive coughs, and the high mucilage content alleviates catarrh (inflammation) of the nasal passages and eases sore throat.

With regard to good digestion, Irish Moss's demulcent properties soothe the mucous membranes of the digestive tract, and the high mucilage content helps to ease gastritis, dyspepsia, nausea, heartburn, indigestion and is also used to prevent vomiting.

Irish Moss is rich in iodine content, supplying the nutrient through the intestinal tract, and it is highly important in supporting good thyroid gland health and relieving the many problems associated with poor thyroid function and iodine deficiency (goiter, fatigue, inability to tolerate cold, slow heart rate, low metabolism, poor skin and hair condition, etc.).

Among the many qualities of Irish Moss, nutrition is one of them. It is edible seaweed and a superior nutritive, and like all gifts from the sea, Irish Moss carries all the positive qualities and rich elements that the oceans produce and has been used as a healthy and nutritional food that can help restore health in recovering invalids.

Irish Moss is a mild and effective laxative by aiding in the formation of the stool and providing fiber that increases fecal bulk. At the same time its demulcent properties soothe inflamed tissues of the intestinal tract, providing help for intestinal disorders. In addition, Irish Moss is said to absorb toxins from the bowel and draw radiation poison from the body.

Irish Moss is thought to help reduce the appetite by virtue of its ability to absorb moisture, increasing its volume and filling the intestinal tract with a mucilaginous, bulking-type material, increasing the feeling of "fullness" and also aiding in the elimination process of waste through the gastrointestinal tract. The escalated metabolic rate caused by improved thyroid function (resulting from Irish Moss's iodine content) helps to increase energy and burn fat and may be helpful in weight-loss regimens.

Because Irish Moss contains blood-thinning properties and is considered an anticoagulant, early research has claimed that Irish Moss may reduce high blood pressure and the risk of arteriosclerosis.

Irish Moss has shown antibacterial activity and may be useful for kidney and bladder infection, and it has also demonstrated antibacterial activity against *Streptococcus mutans*. There is promising research that claims Irish Moss possesses antiviral properties that may be effective against influenza-B and mumps, among other viruses.

Used externally, Irish Moss is a wonderful emollient that softens and soothes the skin and other exposed tissue. It eases sunburn, chapped skin, dermatitis, eczema, psoriasis and rashes. It is used to prevent premature ageing when used topically for smoothing wrinkles on the skin, and the herb promotes a bright, healthy glow.

**Contraindications:** Irish Moss is considered an anticoagulant, and as such, should not be used by those who take prescription blood thinners (Coumadin, etc.). Irish Moss should be avoided by those suffering with Crohn's disease.

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