



Kelp

Kelp and other seaweeds are the great gift from the sea. Besides its *rich iodine content, which is essential for a healthy thyroid*, Kelp has a *remarkable supply of vital nutrients, amino acids, vitamins and minerals* that are key to promoting healthy overall glandular function. Kelp *may even help fight obesity* and be *helpful in weight loss programs*.

Information: Herbals/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 herbals/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 (or call 1-866-378-8253) before starting or changing your program.

Botanical: *Macrocystis pyrifera; Ascophyllum nodosum*

Family: *Laminariaceae/Lessoniaceae; Fucaceae; Sargassum* (kelps)

Other common names: Horsetail Kelp, Knotted Wrack, Marine Algae, Seaweed, Seawrack, Giant Kelp, Brown-Green Algae, Brown-Green Seaweed, Tangleweed, Sugar Wrack, Rockweed

History: Kelp is a common name for leafy algae or seaweed - a nutritious "vegetable of the sea" - and is harvested off the coasts of many of the oceans of the world. Kelp carries all the positive qualities of the sea and the numerous, rich elements that the oceans produce. Among its many uses for mankind, nutrition is one of them, and it was usually used as a source of iodine or salt. It is an important part of the diet in Japan, Norway and Scotland; and for vegans (vegetarians who eat no animal products), Kelp supplies vitamin B-12, which is normally found only in animal products). The term Kelp is used to describe a number of brownish-green species, prepared from several species of *fucus* and *laminariae*, etc. (including *Macrocystis pyrifera*, *Laminaria digitata* and *Ascophyllum nodosum*, etc.), and they may grow from a few feet to over one hundred feet in length, sometimes growing as much as two feet in one day. They generally grow in enormous beds just below the surface of the water and do not have any roots. Rather, they cling to rocks with "holdfasts" (grippers), which are hardy enough to withstand fierce storms.

The entire plant is used in herbal medicine. Kelp is particularly rich in iodine and was the original source of iodine, being discovered by Courtois in 1812. It is interesting to note, however, that earlier, in 1750, an English physician, Doctor Russell, burned dried Kelp and used it as a treatment for goiter, and in 1862, a Doctor Dupare employed Kelp as an aid to obesity, two uses that depend upon Kelp's iodine content. Iodine does not appear in nature in uncombined form but is distributed in the form of iodides and iodates, which are found in sodium and potassium in seawater, some seaweeds and mineral springs. The iodine in Kelp was extracted by "kelp burning" and distilling, which remained viable until the twentieth century when newer, cheaper methods of extraction were employed. Chemical constituents in Kelp include iodine, bromine, alginic acid, sodium and potassium salts, magnesium, calcium, iron, protein, alginates, mannitol, essential fatty acids, silicon, nitrogen, phosphorus, cellulose, selenium, zinc, boron, laminarin, vanadium, molybdenum, beryllium, B-vitamins and vitamin C. The trace

mineral content of Kelp is among the highest of any single known source.

Beneficial Uses: Kelp is a thyroid tonic and a rich source of iodine. If this critical element is lacking in the diet, the deficiency may lead to thyroid malfunction, causing an under-active (or overactive) thyroid gland. Kelp nourishes the thyroid gland and so maintains healthy metabolism and glandular function. Goiter, a non-cancerous enlargement of the thyroid gland, visible as a swelling at the front of the neck and associated with iodine deficiency, has been said to be effectively treated by the use of Kelp, and it has also been said to dissolve firm masses/lumps, ease swelling (such as enlarged thyroids, lymph node enlargement and swollen and painful testes) and reduce edema, all of which can be caused by the malfunction of the thyroid gland.

When obesity is a direct result of thyroid disorders, Kelp may be of some help in weight control by boosting the thyroid's metabolism. There have been some reports that Kelp has also reduced cellulite deposits. Because of its high iodine content, many nutritionists assume that by stimulating thyroid function, Kelp increases metabolism and the rate at which the body uses energy and consequently decreases fat deposits.

Kelp promotes a healthy-functioning and balanced system throughout the body, building immunity and generally improving glandular functions overall (also aiding digestion and respiration). Moreover, some Japanese studies have shown a direct relationship between ingestion of the algin contained in Kelp and the prevention of fibrocystic breasts and malignant cells and think that the algin is responsible. They believe it is partly mechanical, due to algin's fiber content (decreasing the transit time from one end of the digestive system to the other) and also biochemical, due to its enhancement of the immune system. The researchers think that the alginates also affect T-cells, boosting their efficacy.

As a system cleanser, Kelp's rich supply of nutrients from the sea has a buffering ability to neutralize wastes from the body fluids to be more easily discharged from the body. The algin in Kelp absorbs toxins from the digestive system, improving digestion, stimulating kidney function, increasing circulation, and purifying the blood. Kelp has been thought to absorb and remove drugs, chemicals, heavy metals and radioactive strontium from the body. Herbalists claim that Kelp's active ingredient, sodium alginate, binds these toxins in the gastrointestinal tract, preventing their absorption into the body. (By

reducing strontium absorption in the body, the sodium alginate in Kelp could be helpful during radiation treatments.)

As a mild laxative, Kelp provides fiber that increases fecal bulk; and at the same time it also reduces cholesterol levels through the retardation of bile acid absorption. Kelp has been used to soothe the mucous membranes in the respiratory tract, thus reducing catarrh and relieving irritated throat and cough.

With regard to rheumatic pain, elements in Kelp are thought to handle the uric acid that contributes to the pain and eliminate the uric acid from the body. The plant has also been known to help inflamed joints and tissues caused by arthritis.

Asian people use Kelp to treat genitourinary tract problems, including kidney, bladder, uterus and prostate. Some older men have reported that daily use has reduced enlarged prostates and painful urination.

Externally, Kelp has moistening qualities that soften skin and promote circulation, giving a healthy glow when used in a bath. Kelp's rich supply of nutrients and ability to balance and strengthen overall bodily function helps to promote healthy growth of hair, skin and nails.

Contraindications: Those suffering from hyperthyroidism or have heart problems should not use Kelp. Those with high blood pressure or blood vessel disease should not use this product without first consulting a physician. *Pregnant and nursing women should never take Kelp;* the *Laminaria* genus is a uterine stimulant and can dilate the cervix and induce abortion. Kelp should not be taken in large doses (many times the recommended amount), as it may increase pulse rate, cause tremors, acne, elevated blood pressure, hyperthyroidism and counterproductive thyroid function (ironically, there have been reports of an occasional side effect called "iodine goiter" associated with iodine that results in an enlargement of the thyroid gland resembling goiter, and if you experience this, discontinue using iodine, and consult your health care practitioner. Do not take Kelp without talking to your doctor first if you are taking thyroid hormone medicine - examples: levothyroxine (Synthroid®, Levothroid®), desiccated thyroid (Armour® Thyroid). Rare problems with blood (such as low platelets or bleeding) and low blood pressure have been reported with the use of Kelp; speak with your doctor if you are taking blood thinning medication.

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