

THE BENEFITS OF KELP

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Kelp, or kombu in Japanese, according to our research, is a wonderful food and food supplement in dried form. It is a sea vegetable that grows up to 6 feet in one day. It is inexpensive to harvest and dry, and is found throughout the world's oceans. Kelp is helpful often for the following: goiter, other thyroid dysfunctions, edema, constipation, skin problems, slow oxidation, weight loss, poor digestion, parasitic infections, deficiency of vitamin K, along with many others, kidney problems, circulation, the immune response and for general stress.

Kelp is not the same as bladderwrack, Irish moss, dulse, nori, hiziki, wakame and many other sea vegetables, so do not confuse them. The main difference, for therapeutic purposes, is that kelp has much more alginates and perhaps other substances in it that appears to successfully bind the mercury, in particular, that all products from the sea contain today. This is important because eating a lot of the other sea vegetables, as with eating much fish at all, will result in mercury toxicity, unfortunately.

PROPERTIES OF KELP

Kelp is beneficial in at least half a dozen ways.

1. An excellent general mineral supplement. Kelp is well known as an excellent source of most of the important trace minerals. There are few such sources anywhere on earth. Besides the well-known trace elements such as copper, zinc, manganese, chromium and others, kelp supplies many of the ultra-trace minerals such as germanium, iridium, rubidium and others of which we know much less. However, they may be very important for human health, especially today when the food and the soils have become very depleted.

Kelp versus other mineral supplements. Kelp is rich in iron, calcium, magnesium, with some zinc and selenium, but low in copper. This is quite a good blend of minerals and the main reason why we prefer kelp to other "mineral supplements", that are sold. Most people need the extra minerals desperately, and the other mineral supplements that are available either do not contain the ultra-trace minerals or they contain many more toxic metals without containing substances to counteract or bind and remove the toxins. Examples are sea water-based minerals and land-based mineral supplements such as fulvic and humic acid supplements. Please do not use these products!

Kelp versus "green superfoods". I prefer kelp to the other "green superfoods" that are available because kelp does not go bad because the salt in it seems to preserve it better. It is also less expensive. The only way I recommend taking green superfood is in capsules, because exposing most dried vegetables to the air causes them to break down and their value is diminished. Keeping your superfood in the refrigerator or better, the freezer, would help this problem. Many superfoods also contain products I don't like, such as spirulina, chlorella, blue-green algae, other algae and herbs that may be somewhat toxic.

2. A source of readily available calcium. In particular, kelp contains some bioavailable calcium. This is a complex phenomenon because many foods contain calcium. However, we find that kelp, carrots, carrot juice and raw dairy contain the best forms as far as we can tell. The calcium found in pasteurized and homogenized dairy, in seeds and nuts, and in a few other foods is not as well utilized for some reason, which is not clear at this time.

3. An excellent source of bioavailable iodine. This is kelp's best known advantage. It provides plenty of iodine, a mineral that most people need more of today due to the presence everywhere of iodine antagonists. Also, we cannot recommend much fish or any seafood, the other good sources of bioavailable iodine. Iodized salt is helpful, but is not enough in almost all cases and the iodine is not that well utilized by some people.

Some doctors prefer not to use kelp because the amount of iodine in kelp can vary greatly. This is a concern, and for this reason I recommend a standardized iodine amount of about 400 mcg per capsule, which is a common range. However, most sea products contain plenty of iodine, even if the exact quantity is not known. I prefer Kelp as superior to Iodoral, Lugol's solution, and the many other iodine preparations available today because:

- It is a natural food and therefore perhaps better utilized, safer and less costly as well in many cases, and available without prescription.
- The body seems more able to regulate how much iodine it takes in to avoid an overdose because it is a natural product.
- The balance of the minerals in the kelp help prevent the iodine from interfering perhaps, with the absorption and utilization of other minerals. Minerals all compete for absorption to some degree. Taking a balanced food such as kelp, rather than a single mineral product such as Iodoral, is therefore safer for long-term use, and much easier for the body to handle in most cases.

4. An excellent general nutritional supplement. One hundred grams of kelp also contains 1.7 grams of protein, and vitamins A, B, C, D, E, and K. It is particularly rich in folic acid, for example. It also contains many other phyto-nutrients found in plants and soluble fiber. It even contains some fatty acids, including the omega-3 fatty acids and others.

THE MERCURY AND ARSENIC PROBLEM IN KELP

A drawback of kelp and all sea products is the presence of toxic metals, mainly mercury and perhaps arsenic. The interesting thing is that using kelp we have not found greater mercury toxicity. This is not true when one uses the other sea vegetables such as dulse, wakame, nori and others. We are researching this further to make sure that kelp is a safe product.

One fact I have noted is that occasionally a bottle of so-called kelp is not really kelp, but bladderwrack or another seaweed. In these cases, we have found toxic metal problems. So be sure to read not just the large print, the fine print on a bottle of kelp as well. A safe brand is Nature's Way, which is widely available in health stores and on the internet as well. A brand that may not be very good is Maine Sea Coast bulk kelp. I am not sure of the reason for this.

STIMULATION OR OTHER SIDE EFFECTS

Other problems with kelp, so far, are reactions to the product, though they are not common. The main ones include irritability or stimulation. One patient reported becoming nauseous on kelp. Let us address these problems.

Sensitivity to iodine is common in the population. Possible reasons are:

1. Iodine can have powerful effects upon the thyroid gland. However, there is much misinformation about this floating around. Iodine, in fact, can act as an adaptogen. This means that it can help speed up a slow thyroid gland and yet, it can help relax or calm down an overactive thyroid gland, at times. It is not true that iodine in kelp "shuts down" the thyroid, as some medical authorities claim. In fact, it can be just the opposite. Taking pure iodine may do this, but kelp, as a natural food, is more buffered and the body may be able to absorb more of the right quantity of it, so this is not our experience at all.

2. Iodine ingestion will replace, displace, or push out of the body other halogens such as fluorides, bromides, bromates, and chlorides and other chlorine compounds, and perhaps others. Occasionally this could cause nausea or other symptoms. These are purely temporary and are healing reactions, not "allergies to iodine" or to kelp. This is a critical fact to recall at all times.

3. Iodine metabolism is also far more complex and not well understood at all. It is known, for example, that iodine is needed in all body cells, not just the thyroid. It is essential for women's breast health, for example, for vision, for the immune response and for many other functions.

Most people are low in iodine, and when one begins to take more of it, occasionally there are changes in the body that are probably healing in nature, but which can cause symptoms that are easy to mistake for allergic reactions. These may include stomach upset, headaches, irritability and many others.

4. Other elements in kelp, including even possibly toxic effects, need to be studied more, and I am doing this as best I can in a clinical way. Kelp has been eaten by people for millennia, but has not been studied much because it is not a staple food for most human populations. The Japanese probably eat the most sea vegetables of any group, and coincidentally have the longest lifespan of any major civilized population in the world today.

More research is needed on the longer-term effects and benefits of kelp and perhaps other sea vegetables as well. In a world of depleted and toxic soil, and so much mineral-deficient, genetically-modified, hybridized, over-processed and sprayed food kelp and sea vegetables may indeed be lifesavers for humanity until organic, sustainable agricultural methods can restore the soil's fertility and health and bring us much better food than we now can buy anywhere.

A MORE YANG FOOD AND FOOD SUPPLEMENT

This is an interesting fact about kelp and the other sea vegetables, compared to land-grown vegetables. Kelp, in particular, is a very yang product, meaning rich in salt, exposed to a lot of sunshine, and of a more contracted, "drier"

nature when the water is expelled from it. Such qualities are needed today because most food has become far more yin or expanded and cold, thanks to genetic modification and other reasons such as pesticide use.

Kelp is therefore a balancing food and this may be one reason why it seems to work so well with so few problems, in our experience.

The yang quality of kelp does, however, make it a more powerful therapeutic food, almost like an herb, and this could be one reason why it causes more reactions than eating zucchini or broccoli, for example. This may also be a factor in why the toxic metals in kelp, in particular, are not well-absorbed. This will be researched more in the future.

DOSAGES OF KELP

Adults can usually take at least three kelp capsules daily, preferably with meals. One can take more provided it does not cause irritability. Children may take one or two kelp capsules daily. Young children and babies usually will not need to take much kelp.