

What are the benefits of wheatgrass?

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Wheatgrass is a grass that is closely related to wheat. It is a thick, dry grass that looks like hay or straw. It has played a role in natural and holistic medicine for generations.

Wheatgrass is harvested early in its development before it reaches full size — usually 7-10 days after sprouting. Grown primarily to make hay, or for [animals to graze](#), wheatgrass may also offer several health benefits.

Wheatgrass is sometimes called "[green blood](#)" because it contains high levels of chlorophyll that gives wheatgrass products an unusual green hue.

Fast facts on wheatgrass:

- Wheatgrass first became popular in the United States [in the 1930s](#).
- Wheatgrass must be processed before being consumed.
- Some studies suggest that wheatgrass can improve health.
- There is no evidence that wheatgrass poses health risks unless a [person is allergic](#) to it.

What is wheatgrass?

In the 1930s, agricultural chemist Charles F. Schnabel used young grasses to try to save dying chickens. The chickens survived and produced more eggs than other hens.

Quaker Oats and other companies began funding research into the benefits, and soon wheatgrass supplements, juices, and powders were widely available. Proponents of wheatgrass say that it is dense in plant nutrients that can improve health and offer supplemental [nutrition](#).

When people consume the raw grass, they usually do so as part of a juice.

Powdered wheatgrass is also available in capsules, liquid suspensions, or as a powder to add to smoothies.

Benefits of wheatgrass

Some of the benefits of wheatgrass include:

Antioxidant and anti-inflammatory

Some studies have shown that wheatgrass acts as an [antioxidant](#) because of it contains [vitamins](#) A, C, and E.

[Antioxidants](#) reverse the effects of free radicals. These volatile compounds in the body have links to aging and other health issues, including [cancer](#). Antioxidants help fight chronic [inflammation](#), which occurs when the immune system reacts to particular health issues, such as [arthritis](#), stomach problems, skin issues. Antioxidants might even help with [mental health](#) concerns, such as [depression](#).

Many health benefits of wheatgrass may be due to its role as an antioxidant. So it may offer benefits similar to many other plant-based foods.

Cancer prevention and treatment

Like other antioxidants, wheatgrass may help prevent cancer. It could also supplement traditional cancer treatments. [A 2017 study](#) found that wheatgrass could slow the growth of [oral cancer](#).

Other studies have reached similar conclusions. [A 2015 study](#), for example, found that wheatgrass slowed the growth of [colon cancer](#) and caused some cancer cells to die.

Wheatgrass may also improve the effects of [chemotherapy](#). [One study](#) has found wheatgrass can reduce side effects associated with chemotherapy.

Fighting infections

Some research has found that wheatgrass can kill or slow the growth of certain infections. This can be especially helpful in the treatment of infections that are resistant to [antibiotics](#), or in people who are allergic to specific antibiotics.

A [2015 study](#) carried out in a test tube found that wheatgrass has antimicrobial properties that can fight certain types of strep infections, as well as some forms of a bacteria called *Lactobacillus*. *Lactobacillus* bacteria play a role in many infections, including dental infections.

Treating gastrointestinal distress

Practitioners of traditional medicine have long used wheatgrass to reduce stomach pain and manage minor gastrointestinal problems, such as [diarrhea](#).

The purported gastrointestinal benefits of wheatgrass may be partially due to its fiber content. [Wheatgrass is gluten-free](#), making it a good option for people with [gluten intolerance](#).

[Some research](#) suggests that wheatgrass may be particularly useful in treating ulcerative colitis. Compared to a [placebo](#), wheatgrass appears to reduce pain and other symptoms in some people.

For people who do not see improvements using traditional medications, wheatgrass might be an alternative remedy.

Preventing and treating diabetes

Research has found that wheatgrass may benefit those with [diabetes](#). A [2014 study on rats](#), for example, found that wheatgrass could raise [insulin](#) levels, helping to lower blood glucose. By fighting inflammation, wheatgrass may also help reduce the side effects of diabetes.

[Preliminary research](#) points to the power of wheatgrass to fight [obesity](#). Obesity is a risk factor for diabetes and can intensify the adverse health effects of diabetes.

Nutritional breakdown

In addition to the health benefits, wheatgrass offers a number of nutrients that are essential as part of a balanced diet.

[Though low in calories](#), wheatgrass is a good source of protein. It is not, however, a complete protein. Like most plant-based foods, wheatgrass is an excellent source of fiber, which can help reduce blood glucose.

Wheatgrass can also support healthy digestion and help people feel full for longer than they usually would.

Wheatgrass is a good source of vitamins A, C, E, and K, and of vitamin B6, zinc, iron, [selenium](#), and manganese.

Risks

People who are allergic to other grasses may also be allergic to wheatgrass. Likewise, due to cross-contamination and cross-pollination, it is possible for wheatgrass to contain the pollen of other plants.

People with plant allergies should consult a doctor before trying wheatgrass.

Side effects

Some people experience nausea or [constipation](#) after consuming wheatgrass, perhaps due to its high fiber content. People with a history of constipation should talk to a doctor before trying wheatgrass.

Sometimes, the raw form of wheatgrass is contaminated by mold or bacteria. If preparing wheatgrass at home, wash it thoroughly to remove contaminants before using.

When consuming wheatgrass supplements, buy only from a trusted source. Consider contacting the manufacturer to ask what steps it takes to reduce the risk of contamination.

Wheatgrass taste and ideas for consumption

Wheatgrass tastes like grass, and it can overpower other flavors.

How to make it taste better

Mixing raw wheatgrass in a smoothie can still produce a drink that tastes like something out of a lawnmower. But combining wheatgrass with other ingredients that have a strong taste, such as pineapple or citrus fruit, can help balance the flavor.

Ways to consume wheatgrass

Some people prefer to take powdered wheatgrass in capsule form. This almost eliminates the taste and can make it easier to get a daily dose of the grass.

A few wheatgrass supplement manufacturers offer flavored wheatgrass capsules or tablets that include citrus fruits or other dominant flavors.

For people who prefer not to experiment with smoothie or juice recipes, these may offer a tasty solution.

Takeaway

Many studies on the benefits of wheatgrass have produced promising results but have not been well designed. This means it is not possible to know for sure whether wheatgrass can treat or prevent any specific medical condition.

Because most people tolerate wheatgrass well, it is safe to use alongside other treatments. Nobody should take wheatgrass as a substitute for medical treatment. To test the benefits of wheatgrass, try a daily wheatgrass smoothie or supplement.

As research evolves, it may become clear that wheatgrass is an effective medical treatment for other medical conditions. For now, however, the

research is inconclusive.