

## **Flaxseed**

Latin name: *Linum usitatissimum*

Family: Linaceae

### **Miscellaneous:**

- a.k.a. linseed, linum.
- Brown seeds.
- Contains high amounts of essential fatty acids (EFAs).

### **Uses:**

Commission E has approved this phytomedicine as an adjunctive therapeutic option for external and local inflammation, local constipation, irritable colon, and colon damage.<sup>1</sup> It is considered a bulk-forming laxative, and is also highly recommended for stomach irritation, diverticular disease, and as an antilipemic.

### **Mechanism:**

When consumed with liquids, this herb forms a mucilage in the digestive tract. This gel layer acts as a demulcent (soothing to inflamed surfaces), protecting the intestinal wall from direct irritation from digested foods via a gelatinous barrier. The lack of direct exacerbation to the intestinal tissue creates less strain on moving bowels due to stimulation of peristalsis via activation of the stretch receptors, thus allowing prolonged repair time for the damaged tissue.<sup>2</sup> This mechanism is similar to that of other bulk laxatives. What separates flaxseed is its high content of essential fatty acids, alpha-linolenic acid and omega-3 fatty acid, which play valuable roles in cell functioning processes and immune response.

### **Dosage:**

Laxative = 1 tablespoon seeds (crushed/ground) BID-TID taken with at least 150 ml of water

= 1 capsule (≈ 1300 mg) QD with lots of water

Digestive autoimmune disorders = 15-50 g with meals in divided doses and 6-10 glasses of water QD depending on the affliction was the dosage range consistently studied in clinical trials

\*It is imperative that patients take this supplement with plenty of water, especially those with inflammatory conditions of the digestive tract. This medicine works partially by swelling into a soft mucilage that eases irritation, but if minimal amounts of water are taken in conjunction, then intestinal obstruction can result.

### **Contraindications/Side effects:**

Anaphylaxis, pregnant/breastfeeding. Working in part via absorption, flaxseed and other

bulk-forming laxatives may adversely affect absorption of other drugs. It should not be taken by patients with obstructed bowels, and extreme caution should be used with those that are partially occluded.

**Citation References:**

1. Pierce, A., The American Pharmaceutical Association: *Practical Guide to Natural Medicines*: 1999, pp. 269-271.
2. McGuffin, M., Hobbs, C., Upton, R., Goldberg, A.,: *American Herbal Products Association's Botanical Safety Handbook*: 1997, pp. 70-71, 166.

**General References:**

1. Pierce, A., The American Pharmaceutical Association: *Practical Guide to Natural Medicines*: 1999, pp. 269-271.
2. Karch, S.: *The Consumer's Guide to Herbal Medicine*: 1999, pp. 186.
3. Facts And Comparisons: *Guide To Popular Natural Products*: 1999, pp. 89-90.
4. McGuffin, M., Hobbs, C., Upton, R., Goldberg, A.,: *American Herbal Products Association's Botanical Safety Handbook*: 1997, pp. 70-71, 166.