Tulsi: The Incomparable One

Tulsi is revered within India as being without equal for its medicinal and spiritual properties. The Tulsi plant is regarded as the holiest of all plants by Hindus and within Ayurveda, Tulsi is known as “The Incomparable One”, “The Queen of Herbs” and considered an “elixir of life” and a potent adaptogen that promotes longevity. It may seem strange that Tulsi, which is considered the most potent medicinal herb in India, is relatively unknown outside India. The reason for this may be Tulsi’s greatest use is in prevention as an “adaptogen”, yet this is a concept not widely used in the west.

Tulsi: First Aid in a Teacup

By Professor Marc Cohen

• Do you seek ways to reduce the stress and anxiety of modern day living?
• When you travel, are you concerned about the physical demands of air travel, and the unavoidable exposure to a wide range of contagious diseases and toxins?
• Here’s a simple herbal remedy that can address most stress and travel related ills – as easily as enjoying a soothing cup of tea!

How are we affected by air travel?

Modern air travel has opened the world to a range of new business, leisure and living options. In 2013, over three billion commercial passengers will take to the skies. Yet, travelling in a pressurised metal cabin 10km above sea level can have its drawbacks. Despite all efforts by the industry to make flying as comfortable as possible, travellers are unavoidably subject to a wide range of physical, mental and emotional stressors from the time they leave home until arriving at their desired destination. No wonder travellers often arrive at this destination feeling worse off than when they started!

A review of the hundreds of scientific studies of Ocimum sanctum, commonly known as Tulsi, or Holy Basil, reveals that Tulsi is the ideal solution. Science supports the ancient wisdom behind Tulsi, and suggests that Tulsi is an essential travel companion.

Tulsi –“The Incomparable One”

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Adapting to stress – treatment in a teacup

Adaptogens are agents that help the body cope with stress, enhance physical and mental health and promote longevity. Adaptogens are therefore primarily used by healthy people to improve defenses, and increase resistance to a broad spectrum of harmful physical, chemical and biological stressors.

As the pre-eminent adaptogen, Tulsi has a unique combination of antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anti-microbial and other actions that combine to help the body and mind adapt and cope with a wide range of physical, emotional, chemical and infectious stresses.

Tulsi’s unique pharmacological activity particularly helps address many issues faced by modern air travellers such as infection, fatigue, thrombosis, anxiety and dealing with restraint, noise, hypoxia, (from oxygen reduction), radiation, industrial chemicals and poor sleep. The beneficial effects of Tulsi have been demonstrated in numerous animal experiments and human trials have shown that Tulsi can improve general anxiety and stress scores, relieve symptoms such as forgetfulness and feelings of exhaustion and assist with sexual and sleep problems.

Taking the pressure off travel

Despite being pressurised, an aircraft flying at cruising altitude has cabin air with approximately 20-25% less oxygen than at sea level. At a height of around 10km, aircraft are also less protected from cosmic radiation by the earth’s atmosphere with even greater radiation exposure occurring on flight paths further away from the equator. Ionising radiation causes harmful biological effects by directly damaging living tissues, cells and disrupting molecules such as DNA, yet Tulsi has been shown in multiple experiments to protect

How to Use Tulsi

• Consider incorporating Tulsi into your daily regime, especially if you are going to be travelling.
• Keep some Tulsi tea bags in your carry-on, and ask for hot water whenever tea service is offered.
• Recommended every 4-6 hours while travelling.
• Preferably start the day before, until the day after.
• Alternatively, you could also take Organic Tulsi Capsules. 1 gram per day as a preventative measure, 2 grams per day if you are already feeling unwell. This translates into 1 - 2 x 400mg Tulsi capsules twice a day with food and water, or as directed by your health care practitioner.
against such damage. Tulsi has also been shown to protect against radioactive iodine; a significant contributor to the health hazards from nuclear accidents as well as a range of environmental chemicals and other toxins.

Kicking the travel bugs
The Centre for Disease Control in the US currently list over 60 infectious diseases related to travel (wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/diseases). Travellers are more prone to infections due to greater exposure to different pathogens and the immune suppressant effects of travel stress. Yet, recent research suggests that Tulsi may support the human immune system to fight off infections while at the same time suppressing many bugs.

Great travel tip
As a mouth wash, Tulsi Tea can treat bad breath, mouth ulcers and prevent dental plaque. Thus, it appears that travellers may benefit from swishing and gargling their Tulsi Tea before swallowing it.

Treatment as a treat
While herbal therapies are often bitter tasting concoctions, Tulsi Tea is a flavourful, caffeine-free, herbal tonic that is a treat served either hot or cold.

The pleasant taste and aroma of Tulsi is attributed, at least in part, to its eugenol content, which also confers medicinal anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. These properties confer a host of beneficial protective effects and when taken on a regular basis, Tulsi serves as preventative treatment for a wide range of conditions.

When considering that the potent health benefits of Tulsi come in a form that is extremely pleasant and easy to take, it seems little wonder that Tulsi is worshipped as the most valued herb in India.

Now that science has begun to unravel some of its mystery, it seems likely that Tulsi will start travelling the globe as the first aid discerning travellers can take – before they get sick.

So next time you are travelling, make sure you pack your Tulsi Tea bags!
About the author:
Professor Marc Cohen

This article and research summary is prepared by Professor Marc Cohen, co-author of Herbs & Natural Supplements: An Evidence Based Guide, and Professor of Health Sciences at RMIT University as Program Manager for the world’s first online Master of Wellness Program. As one of Australia’s pioneers of integrative and holistic medicine, walking the talk of engaged action has resulted in significant impacts on education, research, clinical practice and policy.

Professor Cohen is a registered general practitioner with degrees in western medicine, physiology and psychological medicine and PhD’s in Chinese medicine and biomedical engineering. As an author, Prof Cohen has made a major contribution to the general medical literature with the publication of two important text books and multiple literature reviews on drug herb interactions and complementary medicine.

Professor Cohen has published more than 60 peer-reviewed articles, authored more than 20 book chapters, and edited 8 books on holistic health. He is also the main contributor and co-editor of the landmark text Understanding the Global Spa Industry, which is the first academic book documenting the global spa and wellness industry.

Selected References from 300 peer reviewed studies