

## The Science of Celery

It is said that the Romans wore Celery around their necks to ward off a hangover, but they would never have considered actually eating it. This is because up until the 16<sup>th</sup> Century celery was only used as a medicine. It was first mentioned in Homer's 'Odyssey' and has since journeyed through time from its relatively wild, leafy and bitter beginnings to arrive full circle on our dinner plates with its medicinal qualities almost entirely forgotten or overlooked.

Science has been looking into some of our ancestor's claims about celery, and as with most traditional wisdom, many of them are holding up under scrutiny. One of these is the traditional use of celery in Asia for high blood pressure which has been put to the test by an assistant professor at the University of Chicago. By injecting research animals with a small amount of an extract from celery, he successfully dropped the blood pressure of the test subjects. The unique way in which celery does this is by relaxing the muscles around the arteries, which in turn creates more space for the blood to flow and consequently lowers the blood pressure. This perhaps can even be seen to reinforce Hippocrates' claim that celery 'relaxes the nerves'.

Another traditional use for celery is as a treatment for Gout and Arthritis with over 25 anti-inflammatory compounds having been identified already within this juicy little treasure trove. In most cases the concentrated seeds are preferred over the fresh vegetable for this action, but due to its diuretic action the juice is not to be overlooked. Being rich in potassium and sodium celery is a natural electrolyte balance and also helps to drain uric acid out of the system which can be a leading cause of rheumatic complaints. Another possible explanation for its success in treating joint disorders is its remarkably high silicon content which is an essential mineral for joints, bones and connective tissue. To make for a stronger brew include the leaves in juices and sprinkle them on top of stews, for this is where most of the minerals are concentrated, but being one of the vegetables that retains the most pesticides it is crucial to only use certified organic produce.

This leads us to the final main area of traditional use for celery which is in weight loss and detoxification. Used by the ancient Greeks for this purpose it is thought to be due to its diuretic action upon the kidneys, which assists in the elimination of toxins and excess fluid. A more modern trend however, has been to chew on raw celery because of its appetite suppressing affects and a documented negative caloric rating. This means that for all the vitamins and minerals it contains, there are fewer calories contained in celery than those the body requires to actually digest it! Don't be afraid to cook it however, because celery is one of the few vegetables that loses very little with heat.

As for the roman science of hanging it around your neck to avoid a hangover, I would juice it and drink it to be on the safe side with that one!  
Till next time,

- The Barefoot Doctor