

PSYLLIUM POWER

Need to improve your intestinal health, blood cholesterol or blood sugar? Psyllium could help.

A native of India, psyllium seed husks (also known as *ispaghula*) are the outer parts of the seeds from the plant *Plantago ovata*, used widely for their health properties.

what psyllium can do for you

Being rich in beta-glucan soluble fibre, psyllium can help in several ways.

- ▶ **Regularity:** When psyllium husks come in contact with water, they swell to form a gel-like texture that can relieve both constipation and diarrhoea.
- ▶ **Cholesterol:** Studies show that consuming 10 grams of psyllium, spread out over the day, results in a seven per cent drop in “bad” LDL-cholesterol. Psyllium is an integral part of any cholesterol-lowering dietary regime.
- ▶ **Blood sugar:** Soluble fibre blunts the blood glucose-raising effect of carbohydrate foods, so adding some psyllium to your meals or snacks can be a good idea if you have insulin resistance or diabetes.

The US Food and Drug Authority is so

impressed with the research findings on soluble fibre, it has approved a health claim that foods such as oats, barley and *psyllium* can reduce the risk of coronary heart disease.

six ways to ingest psyllium

- ▶ Sprinkle on your breakfast cereal.
- ▶ Stir into a glass of water and drink immediately.
- ▶ Mix into a smoothie or yoghurt.
- ▶ Make a mousse with it.
- ▶ Thicken a fruit sauce.
- ▶ Use it to absorb moisture and make less crumbly bread when baking gluten-free.

You can buy plain psyllium husks from supermarkets or health food shops. Commercial brands are also available, where psyllium is ground to a powder with colours/flavours to improve its palatability.

To improve your tolerance to added fibre, introduce psyllium gradually into your diet and always take it along with fluids or moist foods to avoid potential “blockage.”



Nutritionist Sue Radd is the award-winning author of *The Breakfast Book* and co-author of *Eat To Live*, internationally acclaimed for showing how savvy eating can combat cancer and heart disease and improve well-being. See www.sueradd.com for more nutrition information.