

*PUMPKIN SEED OIL, AN UNUSUAL REMEDY

By Mike King

There is a unique variety of pumpkin originating out of the southeastern region of Austria called Styria and commonly found in the countries of the Balkan Peninsula such as Hungary. Today growers are located even in Canada and as far away as China and India. It has been produced and used in Styria's southern parts since at least the 18th century. The earliest confirmed record of pumpkin seed oil use dates to February 18, 1697, found from the estate of a farmer in Gleinstatten, Austria. Pumpkin seed oil has been prescribed in German folk medicine for about as long. Interestingly, pumpkin seed oil was a well-known remedy to rid parasitic infestations of the intestinal tract such as tapeworms. Styrian pumpkin seeds do not have a shell, and the seeds can be easily pressed into pumpkin seed oil. Approximately 2.5kg of pumpkin seeds are required to make one liter of pumpkin seed oil.

Pumpkin seed oil is often used in cooking, baking and as an ingredient in sauces, sausages, and cakes. When added to yogurt the color turns a bright green and is referred to as "green-gold". Unfortunately, when used as cooking oil the high temperatures destroy the beneficial essential fatty acids such as Omega 3's. With a rich unusual nutty taste and high in polyunsaturated fats, the good fats, it is often used as the oil in salad dressing, thus preserving those good fats. Pumpkin seed oil is high in nutrition and a good source of Vitamin A, B-vitamins, Vitamin E, Magnesium, Potassium, Zinc, essential fatty acids, and protein.

Over 12 million Americans have urinary incontinence or over active bladders. Up to 30% of women over 60 have bladder problems and 60% of men over 40 are affected with Benign Prostate Hypertrophy or BPH, which is an enlarged prostate. In contemporary herbal science one of the most popular plant medicines for these diseases is pumpkin seed oil. Pumpkin seed oil has been the subject of a number of studies to identify it's health-promoting potential. This was mainly due to the discovery that the people in countries of the Balkan Peninsula and around Austria had a very low incidence of bladder and prostate problems. Balkan people use large proportions of pumpkin seeds and oil in their diet.

As early as 1986 Hungarian scientists carried out clinical studies that showed great success for BPH and even early stages of prostate cancer. In 1988 a more extensive study showed that pumpkin seed oil could also be used successfully in conjunction with chemotherapy for even better outcomes for men with prostate cancer. Scientist later discovered that the Styrian Pumpkin oil contained a high level of an active ingredient known as delta-7-sterine that successfully blocks and competes with dihydrotestosterone (DHT, a male hormone) receptors in the prostate that cause cancer.

Pumpkin seed oil is safe, effective and backed by a German Commission E monograph, which is a report on the safety and dosing of herbs and botanicals. The oil is often found in formulas or in combination with other nutritional supplements and herbs used to treat many diseases. Today, pumpkin seed oil is sold in capsules for weak bladders, BPH, bladder infections, kidney stones, and irritable bowl syndrome.

Used by over 250,000 Europeans for many years, it is even safe for children and pets. In fact, the only reported negative side effect was at very high doses and that was diarrhea. As is common with any vegetable oil, large quantities can loosen the bowels. The average dose is about 1000mg per day and up to four or five grams per day for intensive supplementation. Even older dogs with incontinence problems get great relief from wetting on the floor after supplementation with pumpkin seed oil. Remember, most over the counter supplements and pharmaceuticals are designed for dosing a 150-pound adult

person. Therefore, when treating pets or even children you can figure their dosage by their weight. This is of course after you have consulted a qualified healthcare professional.

When looking for the medicinal pumpkin seed oil it is best to look for the Styrian pumpkin oil, *Cucurbita pepo var. styriaca*, or *var. oleifera*. Other varieties and species may not work as well even though they may be related, as is our domestic pumpkin. If you are worried about allergies, it is best to consider whether you have any problems with our domestic pumpkins such as is found in pumpkin pie or roasted pumpkin seeds. Generally then, usage of the Styrian pumpkin oil would be considered quite safe and effective.

**This information is for educational purposes only and is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.*