



# Black Sesame Oil Wash

What's one thing you can do to keep your immune system healthy and able to ward off illness during cold and flu season? The answer can't be found on a pharmacy shelf. Instead, visit an Asian grocery store and pick up a bottle of pure, 100 percent black sesame oil. It will cost you about \$5.00. And it will deliver health benefits beyond measure.

You may have used sesame oil in cooking. And if you've consulted the food energy charts available through Wu's Healing Center, you know that, taken internally, sesame oil has a tendency to warm the body. But the immune-supporting remedy you're about to discover calls for the oil of the pure black—not white, not roasted or toasted—sesame seed. And instead of consuming the oil, you're going to apply it externally as a therapy that starts with the body's largest organ: the skin.

## How It Works

1. Before your bath or shower, pour a modest amount of black sesame oil in the palm of your hand and apply it to dry skin, paying particular attention to your face, neck, chest, arms, and legs.
2. Shower or bathe as usual, in warm—not hot—water, using a little water to emulsify and distribute the oil.
3. Rinse thoroughly and pat dry.

*Caution: Like any oil used in the shower, black sesame oil may make your shower floor slick, so please step in and out with care.*

Do this every time you shower or bathe during the winter months, and like other Wu's Healing Center clients, you may find the flu passes you by this season.

How and why does this traditional Chinese remedy work? The answer grows from the Five Elements and the way they manifest in nature and in the human body—wisdom at the core of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Here's a bit of insight:

In Traditional Chinese Medicine, the skin—your body's outer-most margin with the world—is related to the immune system. Keeping the skin healthy and hydrated at a time of year when indoor heating can deplete your personal supply of the water element supports your immune system and your body's ability to ward off illness.

Why the oil of a seed? And why a black seed, at that? The answer has to do with the time of year—winter—and its connection to, among the Five Elements, water, symbolized by the color black. Winter is also related to the seed form of life, just as spring relates to the sprout form, summer to the leaves, and fall to the fruit. The oil of a *black seed* nourishes the body's own *water element* at a time of year (winter) when water is both at its peak energetically—and most challenged.

Although this Eastern wisdom may explain why generations of Chinese grandmothers have advocated a healthy application of black sesame oil in winter, there are other reasons to sing the praises of black sesame oil:

- Sesame oil contains zinc, copper, and calcium and has known anti-bacterial, anti-viral, and anti-inflammatory properties. It has also been shown to lower blood pressure, blood sodium, and blood glucose.
- As a source of Vitamin E, black sesame oil is an excellent anti-oxidant, and high in omega-3 essential fatty acids that are kept at room temperature by two natural preservatives: sesamol and sesamin.
- A report published in Ayurveda indicated that external applications of sesame oil decreased skin infections, lessened joint pain, and even slowed the growth of melanoma.
- Sesame oil is also a source of Vitamin K, which is essential to healthy blood clotting and bone development. Researchers believe that Vitamin K plays a role in preventing osteoporosis, protecting the heart, and regulating blood sugar.

With so much to gain for a \$5 investment, why not make a black sesame oil wash a regular part of your winter regimen? Depending on your constitution, you may even like the cosmetic results so much—including a clearer, better-hydrated complexion and, applied to hair, silken tresses—that, like some Wu's Healing Center clients, you decide to make it a regular practice.

## **Sources**

100 Percent Pure Black Sesame Oil Can Be Found at the May Wah Market, Clement Street, between 8th and 9th Ave., in San Francisco, and at other Asian grocers.