

Conclusions of the Committee

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130. Ginger is commonly used as a spice and flavouring in many countries worldwide and is increasingly growing in popularity as a natural remedy, due to its purported immune system-boosting properties, for easing motion sickness and post-operative nausea and vomiting, and pregnancy related nausea.

131. Several ginger supplements are commercially available, ranging from dried root in capsule form to tincture form, all with varying amounts of ginger. In addition to this, concentrated ginger shots (liquid form), containing large amounts of pressed ginger, are increasingly becoming popular. The variability in the composition of these supplements adds uncertainty to the amount of ginger actually being consumed.

132. Study authors noted that some of the toxicity observed varied according to the nature of extraction solvent; organic solvent extracts exhibited more toxicity than aqueous extracts, which presumably indicates extraction of

differentially toxic compounds. Hence, studies of individual extracts might not give the whole picture.

133. Overall, the Committee concluded that based on the available information it was not possible to determine a point of departure to use in the risk assessment of ginger when used as a supplement.

134. Members noted that although the different ginger extracts were not comparable, there did appear to be some biological activity in the early stages of pregnancy. It was stressed that in general there was no indication of systemic toxicity from the use of ginger in the diet as food.

135. The lack of safety and toxicological information available on ginger use in pregnancy make it difficult to fully characterise the risks in this respect. The committee noted that while there was some equivocal evidence for the possible effect of ginger on reproduction, it was not possible to characterise this based on the data available.

136. Also, consumption data was based on women of childbearing age and therefore may not be representative of the maternal diet, leading to an under/overestimation of the actual exposure.

137. There is no clear indication that ginger is detrimental to pregnant women, although a signal for some adverse effects cannot be ruled out. Generally, normal levels of consumption of ginger within a diet is not considered a health concern. The Committee noted that from the evidence presented, the potential for contamination of ginger with heavy metals and/or mycotoxins cannot be excluded.

COT Secretariat

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