Carob (*Ceratonia siliqua*)

**Common name:** St. John’s bread

**Parts used and where grown:** Carob is originally from the Mediterranean region and the western part of Asia. Today it is grown mostly in Mediterranean countries. The pods are used. Carob pods come from evergreen trees; the gum from carob seeds is called locust bean gum.

**Historical or traditional use** (may or may not be supported by scientific studies): Carob has long been eaten as food. John the Baptist is said to have eaten it, and thus it is sometimes called St. John’s bread. Carob pods have been used to treat diarrhea for centuries.

**Active constituents:** The main constituents of carob are large carbohydrates (sugars) and tannins. The sugars make carob gummy and able to act as a thickener to absorb water and help bind together watery stools. Tannins from carob, being water insoluble, do not bind proteins as some tannins do. Carob tannins do bind to (and thereby inactivate) toxins and inhibit growth of bacteria—both of which are beneficial when it comes to diarrhea. A double blind clinical study has shown carob is useful for treating infants with diarrhea.1 A less rigorous study showed it could help adults with traveller’s diarrhea.2 Dietary fiber and sugars may make food more viscous in the stomach and thus interfere with reflux of acid into the esophagus.3
How much is usually taken? Commonly, 15 grams of carob powder is mixed with applesauce for children.4 Adults should take at least 20 grams a day. The powder can be mixed in applesauce or with sweet potatoes. Carob should be taken with plenty of water. Please note that infant diarrhea must be monitored by a healthcare professional and that proper hydration with a high electrolyte fluid is critical during acute diarrhea.

Are there any side effects or interactions? Carob is generally safe; only rarely have allergic reactions been reported.

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