



Wellness News Network™

Your Source for Health & Wellness Information

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The Spices of Life: Spices That Improve Your Health

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Introduction

A spice is any dried part of a plant (except for the leaves) used for flavoring, coloring or preserving foods. Dried seeds, fruits, roots, berries and bark can all be used for these purposes but spices can have a profound effect on your health, too. According to a 2006 article published in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, spices (as well as herbs) deliver antioxidants and other important bioactive components and can be used in recipes to replace less healthy ingredients, such as sugar.¹ Spices can have specific or wide-ranging health effects on your body. Spices can help protect you from disease or help with your overall health maintenance. Ask your chiropractor what spices may be most appropriate for you and your unique health needs.



Cinnamon

Cinnamon has historically been used to help relieve diarrhea and nausea, boost blood flow to the extremities, warm the body and improve digestion (especially fat metabolism). This spice also helps combat fungal infection and it has been used for weight loss and diabetes management. A 2006 study published in the *European Journal of Clinical Investigation* states that the cinnamon extract may have a moderate effect in lowering fasting plasma glucose concentrations in diabetics with poor glycemic control.² Another study, published in 2010 in the journal *Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition*, notes that cinnamon has anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, antioxidant, and anti-tumor properties, as well as beneficial cardiovascular effects.³

Ginger

Ginger is one of the most commonly used spices for cooking purposes and the list of health benefits associated with this spice is impressive. Ginger has been used by various cultures around the world for the following medicinal purposes: reducing inflammation, stimulating circulation, reducing spasms and as an antimicrobial agent for wounds and sores. A 2008

QUESTION:

What part of a spice plant is not harvested?

- A) root
- B) bark
- C) leaves

ANSWER:

C) leaves

QUESTION:

Which of the following is not a spice?

- A) Turmeric
- B) Ginger
- C) Thyme

ANSWER:

C) Thyme – it is a herb

True or False?

Cinnamon is harvested from the fruit of the cinnamon tree

- A) France
- B) Spain
- C) Hawaii

ANSWER:

False – from the inner bark of the tree

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review article published in the journal *Food and Chemical Toxicology* notes that ginger is a safe and powerful antioxidant substance capable of preventing free radical formation, has anti-inflammatory, anti-hyperglycemic, anti-tumor actions and is capable of favorably regulating immune functions.⁴ Morning sickness, motion sickness, indigestion, hot flashes, headache and muscle pain are all health problems that ginger has been used to treat.

Garlic

Garlic has historically been used to stabilize blood sugar levels, enhance immune function and improve cardiovascular health (by lowering blood pressure, improving circulation and treating arteriosclerosis - hardening of your arteries). According to a review article published in 2002 in the *Nutrition Journal*, the scientific literature supports the idea that garlic is a powerful agent for preventing and treating atherosclerosis, hyperlipidemia and diabetes.⁵ Another review article, published in 2008 in the journal *BMC Cardiovascular Disorders*, states that garlic preparations are better than placebo for lowering blood pressure in people with hypertension. Garlic may also be helpful for sinusitis, colds and flu, digestive problems, insomnia and ulcers and contains the following nutrients: vitamins B1, B2, B3, and C, selenium, zinc, calcium and folate, among others.



Turmeric

Turmeric, a spice grown in India and other tropical regions throughout Asia, has long been used in the ancient healing traditions of India and China for a variety of health purposes. Turmeric, notes the American Cancer Society, destroys or slows the growth of cancer cells in laboratory dishes, slows the progression of several types of cancer in lab animals and shrinks animal tumors.⁶ According to a review article published in 2008 in the *Asia Pacific Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, turmeric helps boost detoxifying enzymes, prevents DNA damage, enhances DNA repair and reduces tumor formation in animals.⁷ This spice has also been used in India for healing wounds, treating rheumatic disorders and addressing gastrointestinal symptoms.



Considerations

It is important to talk with your chiropractor before using any spice for medicinal purposes. Your chiropractor can counsel you on what spices may be most helpful for your specific health needs as well as provide you with relevant information about safe and effective dosage.

Quote to Inspire

"Variety's the very spice of life, that gives it all its flavor"

William Cowper

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