



DELICIOUS HERBS AND SPICES WITH POWERFUL HEALTH BENEFITS

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INTRODUCTION

The use of herbs and spices has been incredibly important throughout history. Many of these herbs and spices were used for their medicinal properties even before culinary use from times immemorial. Modern science has now shown that many of them do indeed carry remarkable health benefits.

CINNAMON:

Cinnamon is a popular spice, found in all sorts of recipes and baked goods. It lowers blood sugar levels and has a powerful anti-diabetic effect. It contains a compound called cinnamaldehyde which is responsible for cinnamon's medicinal properties. It has potent antioxidant activity that helps fight inflammation and has been shown to lower cholesterol and triglycerides in the blood. Cinnamon can lower blood sugar by slowing the breakdown of carbohydrates in the digestive tract and improving insulin sensitivity. Studies have shown that cinnamon can lower fasting blood sugars by 10.0 – 29.0 % in diabetic patients to a significant amount. The effective dose is typically 0.5 – 2.0 teaspoons or 1 – 6 g of cinnamon / day.

SAGE:

Sage gets its name from the Latin word *Salvere*, which means “to save”. It can improve brain function and memory. It had a strong reputation for its healing properties during the Middle Ages and was even used to help prevent the plague. Current research indicates that sage may be able to improve brain function and memory, especially in people with Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's disease is accompanied by a drop in the level of acetylcholine, a chemical messenger in the brain and sage inhibited the breakdown of acetylcholine.





PEPPERMINT:

It relieves irritable bowel syndrome pain and may reduce nausea. Peppermint has a long history of use in folk medicine and aromatherapy. As is the case with many herbs, it is the oily component that contains the agents responsible for the health effects. Many studies have shown that peppermint oil can improve pain management in irritable bowel syndrome. It appears to work by relaxing the smooth muscles in the colon, which relieves pain experienced during bowel movements. It also helps to reduce abdominal bloating that is a common digestive symptom. There are also some studies showing that peppermint in aromatherapy can help fight nausea.

TURMERIC:

Turmeric is the spice that gives curry its yellow colour. It contains several compounds with medicinal properties, the most important of which is curcumin with powerful anti-inflammatory effects. Curcumin is a remarkably powerful antioxidant, helping to fight oxidative damage and boosting the body's own antioxidant enzymes. This is important, because oxidative damage is believed to be one of the key mechanisms behind ageing and many diseases. Curcumin is also strongly anti-inflammatory, to the point where it matches the effectiveness of some anti-inflammatory drugs. Studies suggest that it can improve brain function, fight Alzheimer's, reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer and relieve arthritis.



HOLY BASIL:

It helps fight infections and boosts immunity. Not to be confused with regular basil or thai basil, holy basil is considered a sacred herb in India. Studies show that holy basil can inhibit the growth of a range of bacteria, yeasts and moulds. It is also linked to reduced blood sugar levels before and after meals as well as treating anxiety and anxiety-related depression.



CAYENNE PEPPER:

Cayenne pepper is a type of chili pepper used to prepare spicy dishes. It contains capsaicin, which helps reduce appetite and may have anti-cancer properties. The active ingredient in it is called capsaicin, which has been shown to reduce appetite and increase fat burning in many studies. For this reason, it is a common ingredient in many commercial weight loss supplements. Studies showed that 1.0 g of red pepper added to meals reduced appetite and increased fat burning in people who did not regularly eat peppers. However, there was no effect in people who were accustomed to eating spicy food, indicating that a tolerance to the effects can build up. Some animal studies have also found capsaicin to combat certain forms of cancer, including lung, liver and prostate cancer.





GINGER:

Ginger is a popular spice used in several forms of alternative medicine. It can treat nausea and has anti-inflammatory properties. Studies have consistently shown that 1.0 g or more of ginger can successfully treat nausea. This includes nausea caused by morning sickness, chemotherapy and sea sickness. It appears to have strong anti-inflammatory properties and can help with pain management. One study in subjects at risk for colon cancer found that 2.0 g ginger extract per day decreased markers for colon inflammation in the same way as aspirin. Other research found that a mixture of ginger, cinnamon, mastic, and sesame oil decreased pain and stiffness experienced by those with osteoarthritis. It had a similar effectiveness as treatment with aspirin or ibuprofen.

FENUGREEK:

Fenugreek was commonly used in Ayurveda, particularly to enhance libido and masculinity. While its effects on testosterone levels are inconclusive, fenugreek does seem to have beneficial effects on blood sugar. It contains the plant protein 4-hydroxyisoleucine, which can improve the function of the hormone insulin. Many human studies have shown that at least 1.0 g of fenugreek extract per day can lower blood sugar levels particularly in diabetics.



ROSEMARY:

it can help prevent allergies and nasal congestion. The active ingredient in rosemary is called rosmarinic acid. This substance has been shown to suppress allergic responses and nasal congestion. In a study with 29 individuals, both 50 and 200 mg doses of rosmarinic acid were shown to suppress allergy symptoms. The number of immune cells in nasal mucus also decreased with reduced congestion.

GARLIC:

It can combat sickness and improve heart health. Throughout ancient history, the main use of garlic was for its medicinal properties. The health benefits are due to a compound called allicin which is also responsible for garlic's distinct smell. Garlic supplementation is well known for combatting sickness, including the common cold. For those with high cholesterol, garlic supplementation appears to reduce total and/or LDL cholesterol by about 10.0 - 15.0 %. Human studies have also found garlic supplementation to cause significant reductions in blood pressure in people with high blood pressure.

