Herbs and Spices That Heal

Could your kitchen cabinet hold the key to better health?

March 6, 2008 By Kellee Terrell

For centuries, countries like China and India have relied on herbs and spices to heal their bodies and souls. While many of us have dismissed these established natural practices as eastern-world nonsense, contemporary studies are showing that incorporating certain seasoning into our diets can lower blood sugar levels and cholesterol, reduce inflammation around the heart and joints and fight against Alzheimer's disease. *Real Health* breaks down four inexpensive spices that can improve your health. Best bet: Just add them to what you're already eating!

Cinnamon

- **Potential benefit:** Past studies have shown that this sweet and warm spice can lower LDL levels ("bad" cholesterol), help with Type 2 diabetes by lowering blood sugar levels and boosts memory and cognitive skills.
- **Daily Dose:** Oprah's favorite doc, Dr. Mehmet Oz recommends in his book, *You Staying Young*, that you consume only a half teaspoon a day—too much cinnamon can be toxic.
- **Tip:** Add it to coffee, tea or your morning oatmeal. FYI: This is not an excuse to eat cinnamon buns.

Cayenne pepper

- **Potential benefit:** This extremely spicy condiment has a high concentration of capsaicin, which is found to ease arthritic swelling and improve circulation by increasing blood flow through the body.
- **Daily Dose:** There isn't one, but start slow and build up to this spice; it could upset your stomach and mouth.
- **Tip:** Add it to almost everything! Collard greens to counter the bitter taste and for extra zest,

add to chili, stews or gumbo.

Curry powder

- **Potential benefit:** Turmeric—one component of this strong and bitter Thai and Indian flavoring—is believed to fight against Alzheimer's disease, heart disease and cancer. Studies also show that it can reduce inflammation of the joints, which is great for those suffering from arthritis.
- **Daily Dose:** Dr. Oz says you can have as much as you want—so get curried away! FYI: If you are on anti-inflammatory drugs or blood thinners, talk to your doctor about possible interactions between turmeric and certain medications.
- **Tip:** Add to tuna or chicken salads to give them punch.

Garlic

- **Potential benefit:** This pungent bulb commonly used in Italian cuisine has been found to lower LDL levels and blood pressure along with helping avoid blood clots. It also fights infections and the common cold.
- **Daily Dose:** The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) suggest taking one half to one whole clove to reap the health benefits.
- **Tip:** Chop and mince a whole clove into a salad dressing or sauté it with green beans. Please pop a mint in your mouth afterwards.

While herbs and spices may improve your health, they are not meant to take the place of prescribed medications. Make sure to speak with your doctor or health care practitioner about the benefits and the risks of using alternative practices in conjunction with your current regimen.

To learn more about alternative medicine and therapies, read *RH*'s "The New Medicine Chest."

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