For Medicinal Purposes

The heart--healing power of spices.

March 17, 2014 By Kate Ferguson

Although people have used dried seeds, fruits, roots and barks to flavor and preserve food for centuries, many also use spices to treat illnesses.

Spices are rich in antioxidants, and scientific studies suggest they are also effective treatments against tissue damage and inflammation, say Hannah R. Vasanthi and R.P. Parameswari, biochemists at Sri Ramachandra University in Chennai, India. In an issue of Current Cardiology Review, the two scientists commented about the role spices play in treating and preventing heart disease.

The researchers note that garlic, pepper, coriander, ginger, turmeric and cinnamon—common spices used in India—have a variety of “natural phytochemicals” that complement and overlap ways the body addresses metabolic diseases and age-related degenerative disorders such as heart disease.

“Adding spice to our life may serve as a delicious and sensible way to maintain a healthy heart,” the researchers say.

The biochemists note that more research is needed to look into spices and herbs as sources of antioxidants. But despite the lack of definitive evidence, they believe the suggestion to eat spices makes sense. That’s because these botanicals are rich in bioactive compounds, very low-calorie and relatively inexpensive.

“With time,” the researchers predict, “we can expect to see a greater body of scientific evidence supporting the benefits of spices in the overall maintenance of a healthy heart.”

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