



Herb and Spices -- A Dash of Good Health

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Keywords

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Description

A dash or two of herbs and spices might offer health benefits, according to the November issue of Mayo Clinic Health Letter.

Newswise — A dash or two of herbs and spices might offer health benefits, according to the November issue of Mayo Clinic Health Letter.

Studies are exploring the therapeutic benefits of many herbs and spices, for example, turmeric as an anti-inflammatory to help regulate the immune system, ginger to prevent or relieve postoperative nausea and garlic to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Much is yet to be learned about the effectiveness and safety of large dosages of herbs and spices. In some cases the purported benefits of spices are based on taking a supplement or extract that has a much higher amount of the spice's active ingredient than would be available in food. While the small amounts of herbs and spices used in the kitchen won't provide therapeutic levels, regular use offers a wide array of bioactive substances that have nutritional value.

Herbs and spices in foods may offer these benefits:

Serving as a salt substitute: It's easy to reduce salt consumption by substituting spices.

Providing antioxidants: Allspice, cloves, cinnamon, ginger, oregano, sage, thyme and turmeric powders are high in antioxidants. These plant chemicals may play a role in helping prevent conditions such as cancer, cardiovascular disease and Alzheimer's disease.

Having cancer-fighting properties: Research suggests that antioxidants and other phytochemical substances found in garlic, rosemary, saffron, turmeric and other flavorings may have anti-cancer properties.

Mildly lowering blood sugar: Limited evidence indicates that cinnamon, fenugreek and turmeric may mildly affect glucose levels in people with diabetes. (Herbs and spices don't replace proven diabetes medications.)

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