

Six Everyday Spices for a Healthier You

Spices and herbs don't just add zing to your food but provide health benefits with regular use. Traditional medicines and home remedies have incorporated them as preventive and relief aids for common ailments. Scientific research in recent decades has bolstered these claims. Spices are generally the dry parts of root, stem, bud, and seed of plants while herbs are the green, leafy parts.

Here are six commonly available spices and some of their health benefits.

Turmeric: This root spice is considered to be a powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory agent with immune boosting properties. Research suggests that curcumin - the ingredient that gives it the yellow colour can help in the prevention of Alzheimer's.

Usage- Turmeric is used in cooking in its ground form and often added to warm milk as a home remedy against colds and sore throats.

Ginger: A root spice that provides relief from nausea especially in morning sickness during pregnancy and in motion sickness. Its pain relieving properties make it beneficial to those with arthritis.

Usage - A few thin strips of fresh ginger steeped in hot water can provide relief against flatulence, indigestion, and heartburn. The strips can also be added to tea - green and oolong on a daily basis and as a paste in gravies.

Fennel Seeds: It is another spice with multiple benefits. The seeds can provide relief from abdominal pain and menstrual cramps, indigestion and bloating.

Usage - The Indian variety of fennel seed is consumed after meals as an antacid and natural mouth freshener. Fennel is used in both seed and ground form in cooking. It is also steeped in hot water and taken as tea.

Coriander: This spice is considered as a good source of iron and magnesium and a curative for digestive disorders. Scientific studies were done on groups with irritable bowel syndrome which causes bloating, abdominal pains even constipation. The volunteers who were given coriander based preparations showed up to three times more improvement compared to the other groups.

Usage- The spice in the seed form is added as a part of spice mixture and added separately in as a powder. The herb Cilantro is the leafy part of the plant used as a garnish in cooking but is not as beneficial as the seeds.

Red Chilli Peppers flakes: It belongs to the same family as capsicum and can boost immunity. Bell peppers can prevent the hardening of arteries and are useful in controlling blood cholesterol.

Usage- The flakes can be added as a garnish on most side dishes, and as pizza and salad toppings.

Cinnamon: This spice can regulate blood sugar and help reduce cholesterol. It can reduce inflammation and a sniff of the spice is said to strengthen memory and retentive powers.

Usage: The cinnamon stick is added to gravies and the ground powder sprinkled on dishes including certain desserts. To control sugar levels, a decoction made with hot water is taken, on an empty stomach, in the morning.

Try and add them in smaller quantities till you develop a taste for these spices. Do incorporate one or more of them in your everyday meals and take a step towards better health.

*Article for client