



## The Benefits of Herbs and Spices: What They Can Do For You

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Not only can herbs and spices be delicious ingredients to add flavor to a dish while using less salt, herbs and spices have proven health benefits! Let's refresh what herbs and spices are, shall we? Herbs are aromatic leaves of plants, whether fresh or dried. Examples include thyme, basil, rosemary, cilantro, dill, and sage. Spices are dried bark, roots, buds, seeds, fruit, or berries of plants. Examples include mustard, ginger, pepper, coriander, cumin, paprika, allspice, and garlic powder.

What can these flavorful ingredients do for you? Being derived of plants, herbs and spices are full of polyphenols, commonly known as phytochemicals, that have anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Studies show that phytochemicals are antioxidants that reduce the risk of diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases.



**Cinnamon** has been shown to reduce inflammation, lower blood sugar and lower blood triglyceride levels. Cinnamon has been used to alleviate nausea and to increase sensitivity to insulin and aid in fat burning. It has antimicrobial properties that can help extend the life of foods.



**Turmeric** contains Curcumin, a cancer-fighting compound. Turmeric is frequently taken medicinally for its ability to reduce inflammation and improve joint function. For a spark of flavor, add to egg dishes, soups, meat dishes, sauces and baked foods.



**Garlic**, in the form of fresh cloves, minced, powdered, and granulated, provides excellent flavor. This is another spice that can go into nearly everything from eggs, a pasta dish, or baked chicken. Studies show that just two fresh cloves a week provide anti-cancer benefits.



**Mint** has traditionally been used to calm digestive troubles and alleviate nausea. Peppermint and spearmint leaves are used to make herbal tea, and the volatile oils are commonly used in breath fresheners, toothpastes and chewing gum. The mint herb is easiest to consume in beverage form. However, an adventurous cook could add it to meat dishes or dessert recipes.

Incorporating herbs and spices contributes to nutritional benefits, aromatic scents and flavors, and can decrease the amount of salt needed in recipes. Consider all the wonderful culinary combinations that can be made with herbs and spices. Build your own blend of spices to flavor an entrée, side, or dessert!