# Exploring the Health Benefits of Spices and Herbs

Adding a dash of cinnamon, a pinch of red pepper, or a sprinkle of ginger to culinary creations may offer benefits beyond additional flavor. The latest research shows that spices and herbs offer a number of possible health benefits. The table below focuses on a few popular spices and herbs and explores the research on potential health benefits. Suggestions for spice and herb use are also included. **THERE IS A REASON TO SEASON!**

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| **CINNAMON** | • Cinnamon is the dried inner bark of various evergreen trees belonging to the genus Cinnamomum.  
• Cinnamon comes from the bark of trees native to China, India, and Southeast Asia. | • High-quality clinical evidence (studies in people) to support the use of cinnamon for any medical condition is generally lacking.  
• An analysis of five clinical trials concluded that cinnamon does not appear to affect factors related to diabetes and heart disease.¹ | • Sprinkle on fruits, oatmeal, and yogurt.  
• Add to chili or meat dishes for flavor and color. |
| **RED PEPPER** | • Red Pepper is the dried, ripened fruit pod of Capsicum frutescens, one of the most pungent Capsicums.  
• It is sometimes referred to as Cayenne Red Pepper. | • Possibly effective in treating back pain, cluster headache, fibromyalgia, seasonal allergies, and prurigo nodularis (a skin disease).² | • Creates heat and bite to seasoning blends, meats, pickles, seafood, Italian, Indian, Mexican, and Caribbean cuisines. |
| **GINGER** | • Ginger is the dried knobby shaped root of the perennial herb Zingiber officinale. | • Studies suggest that the short-term use of ginger can safely relieve pregnancy-related nausea and vomiting but are mixed on whether ginger is effective for nausea caused by motion, chemotherapy, or surgery.  
• It is unclear whether ginger is effective in treating rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, painful menstruation, or joint and muscle pain.³ | • Used in Indian curries, and Chinese, Japanese, and European spice blends.  
• Fresh, grated ginger is a refreshing addition to fruit salsas, protein smoothies, and other food mixtures.  
• Often accompanies sushi to clean the palate. |
| **GARLIC** | • Allium sativum, commonly known as garlic, is a species in the onion genus.  
• The plant is part of the lily family that produces a pungent, strong-smelling garlic bulb. | • Preliminary research suggests that taking garlic may slow the development of atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries). Evidence suggests that taking garlic may slightly lower blood pressure, particularly in people with high blood pressure. Some studies suggest consuming garlic as a regular part of the diet may lower the risk of certain cancers.⁴ | • Sautéed with vegetables.  
• Used in Italian pastas & dishes.  
• Added to marinades, sauces, dressings, and spreads.  
• Used to flavor hummus and guacamole. |
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| ROSEMARY     | * Rosemary is the dried leaves of the evergreen *Rosmarinus officinalis.*  
* Rosemary leaves are slightly curved, resembling miniature curved pine needles.  
* Normally hand harvested, the Rosemary plant grows about 2 to 3 feet tall and is very hardy as it grows under harsh mountainous conditions. | * Essential oil of rosemary is possibly effective in treating alopecia areata (hair loss) and arthritic pain. Use with caution in pregnancy or trying to become pregnant.*  
* Used in seasoning blends for lamb and Mediterranean cuisines.  
* Mixed with orange to create a sweet glaze.  
* Fresh rosemary used in marinades for lean meats.  
* Used sprigs for roasting, grilling or on the barbeque.  
* Mixed with orange to create a sweet glaze.  
* Cooked with potatoes and other vegetables. | }

| OREGANO      | * Oregano is the dried leaves of the herbs *Origanum* spp or *Lippia* spp (Mexican). Both varieties have traditionally been harvested in the “wild.”  
* “Oregano” means Marjoram in Spanish, and although sometimes referred to as “Wild Marjoram” it is a different herb. | * Oregano essential oils possess anti-microbial and antioxidant properties.*  
* Used in pizza and pasta sauces.  
* Mexican Oregano is found in chili powders and adds flavor to Mexican dishes.  
* Sautéed with vegetables and bean dishes.  
* Salad and sub topper. | }

| CURCUMIN     | * Curcumin (also referred to as turmeric) is derived from dried rhizomes of the herb *Curecuma longa.*  
* Little reliable evidence to support its use for any health condition because few clinical trials have been conducted.*  
* Often an important ingredient in curry mixes.  
* Add a pinch to jazz up egg salad.  
* Used in many Moroccan dishes.  
* Pairs well with chicken, duck, turkey, vegetables, rice, and salad dressings. | | }

References