
Health Benefits of Spices

There are many benefits of eating a diet rich in spices. Spices provide a wide variety of flavor combinations to enhance the taste of healthy foods, and they contain phytonutrients that protect our bodies by reducing harmful amounts of inflammation and oxidative stress. As with all plant foods, eat a variety of spices regularly for the greatest health benefits.

Health Benefits

Eating a diet rich in spices has been associated with improved blood sugar health, blood vessel health, digestive health, a greater sense of fullness from meals, and even a lower risk of death. Below are some of the health benefits shown in research studies.

- **Cardamom:** anti-inflammatory, blood sugar health, cell protection, heart health
- **Cinnamon:** anti-inflammatory, blood sugar health, heart health
- **Cumin:** blood sugar health, cell protection, heart health
- **Fennel:** digestive health, hormonal health
- **Garlic:** anti-inflammatory, blood sugar health, blood vessel health, cell protection, heart health, liver health
- **Ginger:** anti-inflammatory, blood sugar health, cell protection, digestive health, heart health, pain relief
- **Saffron:** blood sugar health, brain health, cell protection, heart health
- **Turmeric:** anti-inflammatory, blood sugar health, brain health, digestive health, heart health

While very high amounts of spices (or isolated chemicals within spices) are typically used in medical research, some studies have shown that even culinary amounts of spices have health benefits.



Tips for Buying and Storing Spices

- Avoid spices that contain fillers (e.g., sugar, maltodextrin, gluten, artificial colors, preservatives, synthetic anti-caking agents).
- If you buy spices in bulk, store them in air-tight glass or tin containers. Store in a cool, dark place. Heat, light, and moisture will accelerate loss of flavor. Don't buy large quantities – buy what you think you'll use within 6-12 months.
- You can buy spices in their fresh, dried, whole, cracked, coarsely ground, and finely ground forms.
- High temperatures can cause spices to cake or harden and change or lose color.
- Under ideal conditions, ground spices will keep for about a year and whole spices for 2-3 years. To test, rub between fingers to detect an aroma. If you smell it clearly, it's still potent.

Tips for Eating More Spices

- Add cinnamon or ginger to smoothies or coffee.
- Sprinkle cumin, red pepper, or fennel seeds in soups.
- Stew fruits with a cinnamon stick, cardamom, and a vanilla pod.
- Marinate lean meats in curry powder or curry pastes.
- Sprinkle cinnamon and nutmeg over oatmeal or whole grain toast for breakfast.
- Choose meals from cuisines around the world for the widest variety of spices.

Overall Takeaway: Spices have more benefits than simply providing flavor. Aim to eat a variety of spices every day.