

Spice Up Life with Good Health, Says TOPS

Written by Kimberly Greene

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MILWAUKEE, WI – Spices and herbs can give a boost of flavor to any meal, but they also have health benefits. With increasing interest in “functional food,” herbs and spices have been receiving greater attention for their potential to decrease inflammation, reduce the risk of cancer, fight heart disease, and more. TOPS Club, Inc. (Take Off Pounds Sensibly), the nonprofit weight-loss support organization, along with the International Food Information Council (IFIC), explains how different spices can benefit people who are on their own wellness journey.

Basil

Basil can give a fresh flavor to any pizza or pesto, but this spice is more than just a seasoning. Basil has anti-inflammatory properties, which can help prevent swelling and alleviate pain caused by arthritis. It also contains the flavonoids orientin and vicenin that can shield a person’s cells from radiation and other damage. Have a cut or scrape? Basil has strong antibacterial capabilities and can help prevent infections.

Cinnamon

Cinnamon has a subtle heat that is perfect for baked treats and warm beverages. Significant attention is being directed toward its potential in diabetes management. Research suggests that cinnamon may lower blood glucose levels, increase insulin sensitivity, and improve lipid profiles. Also, the sweet aroma of cinnamon has been shown to boost brain function.

Parsley

Parsley adds flavor and color to meals and is a source of vitamins A, C, and K. It also has antioxidants and can aid heart and optimal health.

Mint

Found in tea, ice cream, toothpaste, and more, mint is a versatile flavor. Containing vitamins

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A and C, mint has antioxidants and can help decrease the risk of cancer. It can soothe an upset stomach, relieve heartburn, loosen congestion, and help calm. Let's not forget that mint can also keep a person's breath fresh!

Cilantro

Cilantro is delicious in salsa, guacamole, and salads and has numerous health benefits. It contains anti-inflammatory properties, is a good source of iron, magnesium, and manganese, and can control blood sugar and cholesterol. Research shows that it also can help battle salmonella bacteria.

Garlic

Garlic has anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, and antiviral capabilities. It also can lower cholesterol and the risk of cancer and contains vitamins B6 and C, which fight heart disease.

Red and Chili Pepper

An increase in body temperature or heart rate upon ingestion of a pepper is believed to increase metabolism. Red peppers contain capsaicin, which accelerates energy expenditure and increases lipid oxidation. Studies also suggest that consuming capsaicin decreases fat intake. Chili peppers can fight inflammation and help relieve pain.

Ginger

Ginger provides gastrointestinal and nausea relief. Recent studies also suggest that ginger may play a role in preventing inflammation, which could be useful in alleviating pain caused by arthritis. Ginger plays a potential role in cancer prevention with its antioxidant properties. Its immunity boosting capabilities is another advantage.

Turmeric (Curcumin)

Turmeric, a popular spice contained in curry powder, contains curcumin. Curcumin gives turmeric its yellow pigment and may reduce the risk of cancer, osteo- and rheumatoid arthritis, and Alzheimer's disease. It also has antioxidant properties.

TOPS Club Inc. (Take Off Pounds Sensibly), the original, nonprofit weight-loss support and wellness education organization, was established more than 63 years ago to champion weight-loss support and success. Founded and headquartered in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, TOPS promotes successful, affordable weight management with a philosophy that combines healthy eating, regular exercise, wellness information, and support from others at weekly chapter meetings. TOPS has about 170,000 members in nearly 10,000 chapters throughout the United States and Canada.

Visitors are welcome to attend their first TOPS meeting free of charge. To find a local chapter, view www.tops.org or call [\(800\) 932-8677](tel:8009328677).

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