

Boost Your Health With Spices

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SATURDAY, Jan. 6 (HealthDay News) -- Adding spices such as basil, oregano, garlic, curry, and rosemary to your diet can benefit your health, according to Suzanna Zick, a naturopathic physician and researcher at the University of Michigan Health System.

"Adding herbs and spices can help you maintain a healthy weight. Plus, they can help prevent certain cancers, and even lower blood pressure, control blood sugar and improve cardiovascular health," Zick said in a prepared statement.

By replacing traditional seasonings like sugar, salt and fat with herbs and spices, you can improve your overall health -- along with the flavor of your food.

Zick has the following 10 tips for picking the best spices for your overall health:

- * **Replace salt with herbs.** Herbs such as oregano, thyme, rosemary, parsley and garlic can bring out the natural flavors in a meal.
 - * **Use fresh garlic.** Garlic can lower blood pressure and cholesterol. "For maximum benefit, you need to have about three medium cloves of garlic per day. Dry garlic, or garlic left out too long, loses its healthy benefits," said Zick.
 - * **Eat rosemary.** Rosemary is an antioxidant that is thought to improve memory and possibly help prevent cancer.
 - * **Fight colds with basil, oregano and rosemary.** The essential oils in these herbs may be able to fight against colds and flu.
 - * **Treat chronic coughs with thyme.** "The health benefits of thyme are unique. It has been traditionally used to treat coughs, even whooping cough," said Zick.
 - * **Eat turmeric for back pain.** Researchers have found that a substance known as curcumin that is found in turmeric has anti-inflammatory properties. Turmeric can be used alone, and is added to curry mixes.
 - * **Fight cancer with curry.** Curcumin has also been shown to shrink pre-cancerous colon polyps.
- Use "warming spices" to lower blood pressure. "Warming spices," including ginger, nutmeg, cinnamon, allspice, pepper, and cayenne pepper, bring blood from the center of the body to the skin. According to Zick, this disperses blood throughout the body more evenly, which may decrease blood pressure.
- * **Eat ginger to soothe your stomach.** Substances called gingerols in ginger can help control nausea.
 - * **Replace sugar with spices.** Add spices like cinnamon and nutmeg to sweet snacks instead of sugar.

For More information:

The National Library of Medicine has more about herbs and supplements.

-- Krisha McCoy

SOURCE: University of Michigan Health System, news release, Jan. 2, 2007