



Center for Integrative Oncology and Survivorship

Spices and Herbs with Proven Health Benefits

There is a growing body of research examining the role some spices and herbs may play in reducing the risk of cancer. Below you will find information about some herbs and spices with proven health benefits. Be sure to speak with your doctor before making any changes to your diet or beginning to take a supplement.

Curcumin is the active ingredient found in turmeric, and it is believed to have anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer properties. Some cancer research shows that it also may help patients suffering from cachexia. Curcumin may affect the enzymes that are part of the cytochrome P450, which can affect how your body responds to different cancer treatments.

Recommended dosage is 2,000 mg/day in place of NSAIDs for treatment of inflammation.

Ginseng has been studied for its use to treat headaches, nausea and fatigue. The active ingredients are known as ginsenosides and are believed to be the source of ginseng's health benefits.

Ginseng can interact with other medications, such as diabetes medications, or interfere with blood thinners such as Coumadin (warfarin). It also may cause cancer cell growth in patients with breast cancer. Ginseng is available in different forms such as dried, extracts, powders, capsules and tablets.

Recommended dosage is 2,000 mg/day for cancer-related fatigue.

Garlic has been used as a spice and for health purposes for more than 5,000 years. It also has been associated with reduced risk of certain types of cancer and reduced infections caused by some cancer treatments. It is rich in flavonoids and high in sulfur content. It may interact with medications such as blood thinners.

Recommended dosages for general health benefits are 1 clove of fresh garlic, 0.4-1.2 grams of dried powder, 2-5 mg garlic oil and 300-1,000 mg garlic extract a day.

Ginger has been studied for its ability to ease upset stomach or nausea. The active ingredients are shogaol and gingerol, which can help relax muscles in the stomach and intestines. The anti-nausea effects are similar to those of anti-nausea medications.

Ginger can interact with medications such as blood thinners and cause an increased risk of bleeding. Ginger is available in many forms, and a good starting point is the use of ginger teas or a ginger capsule.

Recommended dosage for upset stomach is 2 to 3 capsules (550 mg each) an hour before eating.

Pomegranate juice has been studied for its phytochemical and antioxidant effects, which may be due to the polyphenols (tannins, anthocyanins, flavonols and ellagic acid) found in pomegranate seeds.

Some cancer research shows that pomegranate juice may reduce breast and prostate cancer tumor growth through inhibition of different pathways. Specifically, pomegranate juice may slow the rate at which PSA levels rise in men with prostate cancer.

Pomegranate juice can affect how CYP 450 enzymes function in patients taking statins. Patients with diabetes should use it in moderation and check blood sugar levels regularly.

Recommended dosage for cancer prevention is 8 ounces a day.

Other Resources

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center: AboutHerbs.com

Survive and Thrive Blog: blog.ghs.org/category/surviveandthrive

To learn more about how herbs can play a role in your health, please call the Center for Integrative Oncology and Survivorship at **(864) 455-1346** to schedule an appointment for nutrition counseling or an integrative oncology consult.

