

## SPICE UP YOUR LIFE (AND YOUR HEALTH) WITH THESE 3 SUPER SPICES

Long before there were drug companies, people used plants to treat and prevent illness. Today, most of the world still uses herbs and spices to improve health and manage symptoms of disease. Did you know that many everyday spices have therapeutic properties?

Here are three super spices that may already be part of your diet (if not, give them a try), and the benefits of using each one.

### 1. Cinnamon

A favorite among bakers, especially in the fall, cinnamon is a **natural fat burner**. Its effects on metabolism have been widely studied in recent years, and what researchers have found is certainly a pleasant surprise. It seems that cinnamon can help **lower levels of both LDL (“bad”) cholesterol and sugar in the blood**. This is welcomed news for people with heart disease or diabetes as well as those who may be at risk for either condition. As an added benefit, when cinnamon lowers blood sugar, it does so by **regulating insulin levels**. Since high insulin levels are associated with weight gain, cinnamon can also help you **lose weight** and keep it off. Try getting ½ to 1 tsp. of cinnamon in your diet each day. You can stir it into coffee, mix it with your morning oatmeal or add it to yogurt. And of course, you can bake with it!

### 2. Turmeric

If you enjoy Indian cuisine, you’re probably already familiar with this super spice. While it is a staple of Indian food, turmeric is also used medicinally in both Indian (Ayurvedic) and Chinese medicine for centuries. The spice has strong **antioxidant, antibacterial, and antifungal** properties. In a nutshell, this means that turmeric packs a 1-2-3 punch against all kinds of illnesses, including cancer. Turmeric contains “curcuminoids,” potent phytochemicals (a fancy word that means *substances in plants*) that help protect and even strengthen the liver, the organ that removes toxins from the body. Turmeric also helps **boost immunity** and protects the body from free radical damage. Simply put, take your turmeric (or better yet, cook with it), and you’re less likely to get sick.

### 3. Cayenne

Cayenne (hot pepper or chili pepper) is an acquired taste for many people, but if you can acquire this taste, you will be ahead of the health game. Cayenne is a popular spice in foods from the southwest, Mexico, and Latin America. As rich in nutrients as it is hot, cayenne acts on both the **digestive and immune systems**. It helps food move through the digestive tract, and even though it may “burn” going down, cayenne can actually help **heal stomach and intestinal ulcers**. Like turmeric, cayenne also has **antibacterial** and antifungal **properties**. Add a bit to your food, and you can reduce the chances of getting food poisoning, as this spice will destroy any bacterial that is present in the food.

If you don’t have a taste for these spices, you may still be able to get at least some of their benefits by taking them in supplement form. You’ll be missing out on some tasty dishes, though!