

SPICE up your life!

These clever ingredients not only help your food taste better, they could also improve your health...



BLACK AND WHITE PEPPER

Good for: digestive problems. 'This is a digestive aid and helps you absorb food better,' says Dee Atkinson medical herbalist and spokesperson for the National Institute of Medical Herbalists (www.nimh.org.uk).

USE IT: 'Grind black peppercorn on to meals, particularly with turmeric as it helps its active ingredients to be absorbed,' says Dee.

Some experts believe black and white pepper can cause you to sweat more and increase the likelihood of hot flashes. So if you're of perimenopausal or menopausal age it might be an idea to cut it down.



GINGER

Good for: nausea, colds and flu, heavy periods and poor circulation.

Renowned for its anti-nausea properties, ginger can help with morning – and motion – sickness. Make a tea by steeping a teaspoon of fresh ginger in boiling water for five minutes.

USE IT for colds and flu: 'Eat it raw as cooking destroys its antiviral properties,' says herbalist Jill Davies (herbs-hands-healing.co.uk). She recommends having a teaspoon of grated ginger with honey three times a day.

USE IT for circulation and heavy periods: Michelle Matthews suggests one cup of ginger tea a day for circulation and two to three a day, two weeks before your period, for heavy periods.



CHILLI

GOOD FOR: a slow metabolism, coughs and colds.

USE IT for colds and flu: Add it to meals, such as curries – use powder, flakes or fresh chillies.

USE IT to boost your metabolism: Add half a teaspoon a day to your meals. If you don't like hot food take a supplement. Try Solgar Cayenne capsules, £8.51 for 100 from Nutricentre (www.nutricentre.com).



TURMERIC

Good for: joint pain, and may reduce cancer risk. 'This has powerful anti-inflammatory and antioxidant effects and may help with arthritis,' says Michelle Matthews, naturopath and herbalist and member of the General Council and Register of Naturopaths (www.grn.org.uk).

Some early research indicates that curcumin (the main ingredient of turmeric) could, in some cases, stop precancerous changes becoming cancer. **USE IT:** Add a teaspoon a day to stir-fries or stews. Dee Atkinson recommends this daily drink: *Mix 1 tsp turmeric with 1 cup coconut, almond or rice milk, 1 tsp coconut oil, a pinch each of black pepper and cinnamon powder. Heat in a pan, stir, add honey if required, and drink warm or cold.*



CINNAMON

Good for: weight problems, coughs and colds.

'It has anti-fungal, antibacterial and antiviral properties. It also has a balancing effect on blood sugar levels,' says Dee Atkinson.

Cinnamon has been shown to help beat sugar cravings, so may help with weight issues, too.

If you're on diabetes medication seek professional advice before taking it.

USE IT for coughs and colds: 'Try eating half a teaspoon of cinnamon mixed with a teaspoon of honey. Do this two to three times a day,' says Ayurveda practitioner Sunita Passi (www.sunitapassi.com).

USE IT to help balance blood sugar and beat cravings: 'Have three teaspoons once a day or one teaspoon three times a day,' says Dee. Add it to yoghurt, cereals or smoothies.

CLOVES

Good for: toothache, nausea and flatulence.

USE IT for toothache: Place a clove on the affected tooth and bite on it or chew it a little.

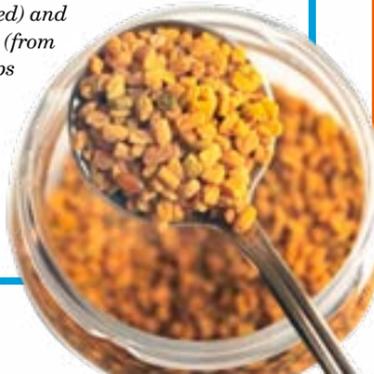
USE IT for nausea and flatulence: Make a clove tea by putting two cloves in a large cup of hot water in a pan and boiling it for five minutes. Have one cup a day.

FENUGREEK SEEDS

Good for: low libido and menopausal hot flashes.

USE IT: Dee Atkinson recommends the following: *Put 1 tsp fenugreek into 2 cups of water, bring to the boil, simmer then add 1 tsp each of sage, rose petals (unsprayed) and marigold petals (from health food shops or herbalists).*

Cover, take off the heat and leave until cold. Strain. Have three cups a day.



CARAWAY SEEDS

Good for: bloating and flatulence.

USE IT: To make caraway tea. Crush a teaspoon of caraway seeds and leave them to steep in a pan with a large cup of simmering water for five minutes. Have three cups a day.

Add caraway when cooking greens such as cabbage to help reduce their 'windy' effect – that's a polite way to say they'll stop you farting so much!

CUMIN

Good for: digestive and weight problems.

A recent study showed that taking three grams of cumin once a day helped with reducing cholesterol and aided in weight loss.

USE IT: Sprinkle up to two teaspoons a day in salads, sandwich fillings and curries.



CORIANDER

Good for: digestive problems and migraines.

'It can help calm the digestive system and may also help the gut absorb foods more efficiently, so nutrients can be better assimilated through the body,' says Sunita Passi.

Eating a teaspoon of the seeds daily has been found helpful in reducing migraines, too.

USE IT: Add a teaspoon to curries and stews.

