**Health Benefits of Spices**

A spice is a seed, fruit, root, bark, bud or other vegetable substance primarily used for flavouring, colouring or preserving food. Spices are distinguished from herbs, which are part of leafy green plants used for flavouring or as a garnish. Many spices have antimicrobial properties. Spices have long been used to enhance the taste of food, to provide health benefits.

Traditionally, the Chinese have integrated food, nutrition and health and include spices in specially prepared soups, dishes or beverage for their health benefits. Many traditional diets around the world include considerable amounts of added spices. Indian cooking uses spices to add distinctive and rich flavours and significant quantities can be consumed in one meal.

As the ancient knowledge of spices encounters modern science and technology, there will be new opportunities developed that encourage the use of spices in cooking not only for their taste benefits but also for their health benefits.

**Turmeric**

Turmeric is called the “Queen of spices”. It is a spice that comes from the root of the curcuma longa plant. It has been used in India for thousands of years as a spice and medicinal herb. It is traditionally called Indian Saffron.

According to the Journal of the American Chemical Society, turmeric contains a wide range of antioxidant, antiviral, antibacterial, antifungal, anti-carcinogenic, antimutagenic and anti-inflammatory properties. It can help prevent prostate cancer, relieves arthritis, controls diabetes, reduces the cholesterol level and immunity booster.

**Cumin Seeds**

Cumin is the seed of a small umbelliferous plant. Cumin is native to Egypt and has been cultivated in the Middle East, India, China, and Mediterranean countries. Cumin has played an important role as a food and medicine and has been a cultural symbol with varied attributes.

Cumin seeds are used in cooking and the oil is used to flavour food. Components may have antioxidant, anticancer, antibacterial and larvicidal effects. Cumin may lower blood sugar, reduce seizures, strengthen bones and treat the eye. Recent studies have revealed that cumin seeds might also have anti-carcinogenic properties. In laboratory tests, this powerful little seed was shown to reduce the risk of stomach ulcer.

The health benefits of cumin for digestive disorders are well known throughout history. It can help flatulence, indigestion, diarrhea, nausea, morning sickness, and a tonic for dyspepsia. In this case, the seeds are boiled in water to make a tea of sorts - 1 teaspoon seeds to 1 glass water. Mix with salt and a teaspoon of coriander leaf juice. Cumin also helps to relieve symptoms of the common cold due to its antiseptic properties.

**Black Pepper**

Black pepper is the fruit of the black pepper plant from the Piperaceae family and is used as both a spice and medicine. It is native to Kerala the Southern State of India. Since ancient times black pepper is one of the most widely traded spices in the world. It is a rich source of Manganese, Iron, Calcium, Potassium, Vitamin A, C, K, Zinc, Chromium and other nutrients.

The health benefits of black pepper include relief from respiratory disorders, coughs, the common cold, constipation, indigestion, anemia, impotency, muscular strains, dental disease, pyorrhea, diarrhea, and heart disease. It also increases the hydrochloric acid secretion in the stomach, thereby facilitating digestion and the out layer of peppercorn assists in the breakdown of fat cells.

**Garlic**

Garlic is widely used around the world for its pungent flavour as a seasoning or condiment. Garlic is a plant in the onion family. Originally the plant was native to Central Asia. Garlic has been used as both an important dietary constituent and a medicine in different culture around the world.

Garlic is great for boosting the immune system, obtaining high levels of Vitamin C and being identified as a serious anti-cancer food. Because of its high potassium content, it can aid in absorption of essential nutrients and help avoid digestive problems and fatigue. Garlic can also help in lung and throat problems due to its pungent smell.
Ginger

Ginger the rhizomes of the plant zingiber officinale roscoe, is arguably one of the most widely used culinary agent and spice in the world. It was originated in Asia. Several compounds in ginger may be related to its health benefits, including shogaol, zingerone and gingerols.

Ginger as the universal medicine, in particular for relieving nausea, stomach aches, diarrhoea, asthma, respiratory disorders, toothache, gingivitis and arthritis. The phenolic compounds in ginger are known to help relieve gastrointestinal irritation.

Cardamom

Cardamom is a spice made from the seeds of the several plants in the genera elettaria and amomum in the family zingiberaceae. Cardamom is a spice that originated in India, Nepal and Bhutan. In India cardamom was traditionally considered as a herb and was one of the ingredients in Ayurveda and traditional Chinese medicine.

It was believed to be a remedy for teeth and gum infection, throat problems, congestion of the lungs, pulmonary tuberculosis, inflammation of the eyelids, gastrointestinal disorders, disintegrating kidney and gall bladder stones. Other health benefits of cardamom include cholesterol control, control of cancer, relief from cardiovascular issues and improvement of blood circulation in the body.

Clove

Clove is the dried bud of the flower from the tree syzygium aromaticum. It belongs to the plant family named myrtacea. It is native to the Maluku Island in Indonesia.

It offers many health benefits, some of which include providing aid in digestion, having antimicrobial properties,
fighting against cancer, protecting the liver, boosting the immune system, controlling diabetes, preserving bone quality and containing anti-mutagenic properties as well as fighting against oral diseases and headaches.

**Cinnamon**

Cinnamon is a spice that comes from the bark of the Cinnamomum tree. It is native to Caribbean, South America, and South East Asia.

Cinnamon is a powerful spice that has been used medicinally around the world for thousands of years. It contains several special compounds which are responsible for its many health promoting properties including cinnamaldehyde, cinnamic acid, and cinnamate. These compounds make cinnamon one of the most beneficial spices on earth giving it antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, anti-diabetic, anti-microbial, immunity boosting, cancer and heart disease protecting abilities.

**Peppermint**

Peppermint is also known as M. Balsamea Willd. It is a hybrid mint, a cross between watermint and spearmint. Peppermint is native to Europe and the Middle East, now widespread in cultivation in many regions of the world.

Peppermint is popular as a traditional or folk remedy for several conditions and illnesses because of its calming effects, including flatulence, menstrual pains, diarrhea, nausea, depression related anxiety, muscle and nerve pain, the common cold, indigestion, headache, and irritable bowel syndrome.
Anise

Anise is an annual important spice and medicinal plant belonging to the family of Apiaceae and native to the Mediterranean region and southwest Asia. Today, anise seeds are an important natural raw material used in pharmaceutics, perfumery, food and cosmetic industries.

Anise is an excellent remedy for asthma, bronchitis, cough, microbial infections and diseases, head lice, skin disease, regulating menstruation, pain relief as well as digestive disorders such as flatulence, bloating, colicky, stomach pain, nausea and indigestion.

Asafoetida

Asafoetida is also known as the Devil’s dung. From the nutritional viewpoint, asafoetida offers protein, fiber, carbohydrates, calcium, phosphorus, iron, niacin, carotene as well as riboflavin.

Asafoetida is a remedy for indigestion, menstrual pain, ear ache, body pains as well as tooth ache. However, individuals with high blood pressure levels should prevent taking asafoetida separately. Pregnant women and people struggling with blood clotting issues ought to practice caution whenever taking asafoetida separately.

Conclusion

To improve the health of our nation it is critical that the people are motivated to not only reduced their sodium intake but also consume less of the Western diet characterized as a dietary pattern high in red and processed meats, reduced grains, sodium, sweets and fried foods. Using spices to add flavour and variety to energy and sodium-reduced meals may help motivate dietary change and reduced nutrition-related disease risk. Spices such as turmeric, fenugreek, mustard, ginger, onion and garlic have a wide variety of bio-functions and their additive or synergistic actions are likely to protect the human body against a variety of insults. Traditionally spices as part of the diet, having holistic effects on human health.