

Spice it Up for Health

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Spices add flavor and health benefits to food in two ways. First, spices increase the amount of antioxidants you eat. Secondly, they can help reduce the amount of sugar, salt and fats added to foods.

Antioxidants are components in foods that can help reduce disease. Antioxidants reduce the damaging effects that substances, called free radicals, do in the body. They can help prevent and repair damage, improve your body's ability to fight infection; even lower your risk of cancer. We get a lot of antioxidants from spices, herbs, fruits and vegetables.

- **Spices and Herbs High in Antioxidants:**

Basil	Black pepper
Chili pepper	Chili powder
Cloves	Curry
Ginger	Italian Seasoning
Oregano	Paprika
Turmeric	

Cayenne pepper
Cinnamon
Garlic
Mustard seed
Rosemary

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Spices also improve health by adding flavor to food. They enhance and improve the flavor of food without adding fat, sugar or salt. For example, adding garlic and basil to tomatoes adds enough flavors that you can reduce the amount of salt you might otherwise add. Try adding chili powder, garlic and cumin to low-fat ground turkey instead of using higher fat ground beef for tacos. This helps reduce the amount of fat in the taco filling. If you add spices such as cinnamon, clove, nutmeg or ginger to baked goods, they make food taste sweeter without the addition of sugar. Avoid seasoning blends and spices that contain added salt or sugar.

Tips: Using Fresh vs. Dried

- Whole dried spices and herbs release flavor slower than ground spices and herbs
- Ground dried herbs release flavor quickly and have a stronger flavor than fresh herbs
- One teaspoon of dried herbs = 3 teaspoons of fresh herbs
- Add fresh herbs at the end of cooking

Tips: Storing Spices and Herbs

- Dried spices and herbs are stored best in an airtight container in a cool, dry and dark area
- Spices and herbs lose flavor over time. For best flavor, use ground spices within a year and whole spices within 2 years.
- Fresh herbs are best stored upright with stems in water
- Spices and herbs can be expensive, so look for sales, buy a small amount at a time, or share a large container with someone.

Activities

While spicing up your food, try spicing up your physical activities as well. If you walk, try taking a different route. If you run, try jogging backward for the count of 30 then turn around again. Borrow a (new to you) exercise DVD or video from the library. If you exercise alone, ask a friend or family member to join you. If you need to have a meeting with someone, ask them to walk with you while you talk.

Let's Talk

Most kids love to experiment with food. And most kids are more willing to try a new food if they helped prepare it. So let them help you as you experiment with adding some spice to your foods. If kids are helping in the kitchen, make sure spices have a shaker top, or instruct them to use their fingers, adding just a pinch of spice at a time. A little spice goes a long way!play. Children need to have active time every day to use up energy, learn new things and be healthy.

Recipe for Health:

Meatballs in Curry Sauce

Most kids already like meatballs, so this spiced up sauce might be a good way for them to try a few new spices.

Ingredients:

20-24 ounce package of low-fat meatballs or 24 -30 homemade meatballs (about the size of a walnut), cooked

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

½ cup chopped onion

5 teaspoons curry powder

Or, make your own curry powder by mixing together:

(¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon, ¼ ground cardamom, ½ teaspoon dried ginger,

1/2 teaspoon red chili powder,

1 teaspoon turmeric powder, 2 tablespoons coriander powder)

1 teaspoon garlic powder

12-15 ounces canned, diced tomatoes

1cup frozen or canned peas (optional)

1 cup water

Salt to taste, only if needed



Directions:

In a large sauce pan over medium heat, cook onion in oil until tender. Add curry spice(s) and garlic powder, cook 2 minutes. Add tomatoes and water, simmer 10 minutes. Crush large pieces of tomato with a potato masher if needed. Add cooked meatballs and peas to sauce, simmer 5-10 minutes. Add salt if needed. Serve with rice, pasta or potatoes.