Some of us use spices to add a little zip to our meals, but did you know they offer much more than just flavoring? Countless studies have linked spices to the prevention and treatment of more than 150 health problems—including cancer, diabetes and heart disease. Interestingly, back in 1995 there were fewer than 50 published scientific studies on the healing potential of spices. Today, there are thousands!

Worldwide, researchers have discovered that spices contain compounds that fight oxidation and inflammation—the two processes underlying most chronic diseases. In fact, some researchers say herbs and spices have more disease-fighting antioxidants than many fruits and vegetables. What that means to you? In addition to including whole foods into your diet, be sure to have a diet rich in spices, too!

Here’s just a few of the top spices, their health benefits and suggestions for how to use them in everyday cooking:

**CINNAMON**
This ancient spice has a long history of medicinal use and is an antioxidant powerhouse. Cinnamon’s unique healing abilities come from the essential oils found in its bark, which are potent antibacterial and antifungal stimulants.

**HEALTH BOOST:** Cinnamon helps regulate daily blood sugar and cholesterol and offers anti-inflammatory benefits. It also provides relief from colds or flu, especially when it’s mixed in a tea with some fresh ginger. It has been used to treat flatulence, nausea, diarrhea and painful menstrual periods. It’s also believed to improve energy, vitality and circulation.

**GET COOKING:** Toss a cinnamon stick into beef stew or use as a stirrer for coffee, tea or hot cocoa. Put a dash of ground cinnamon on oatmeal, cereal, squash and rice pilaf. Or, try sprinkling a mix of cinnamon and brown sugar on apples, bananas, melons and oranges.

**CORIANDER**
Also known as Chinese parsley, coriander comes from the sweet, nutty seeds of the coriander plant (not to be confused with cilantro, an herb, which comes from the strongly scented leaves of the coriander plant).

**HEALTH BOOST:** Eases digestive discomfort—such as abdominal cramping, bloating, diarrhea and constipation. Coriander works like an antispasmodic drug, relaxing the contracting digestive muscles. This same relaxing effect works on the arteries, which is why coriander is also linked with helping lower blood pressure.

**GET COOKING:** Mix coriander seed with peppercorn in your peppermill. Coarsely grind coriander and rub it into meats or fish before cooking. Add whole or ground seeds into stews, casseroles, marinades, vinaigrettes and pickled dishes.
Turmeric, also a main spice in curry powder, is a kitchen staple in India and found in almost every dish that crosses the table—a fact that has not been lost on researchers, who observed 30 years ago that the incidence of chronic disease among people in India is significantly lower than in the United States.

HEALTH BOOST: Turmeric is the only readily available edible source of curcumin, a compound so rich in antioxidants and anti-inflammatory agents that thousands of studies have shown it protects and improves the health of virtually every organ in the body, as well as safeguards our brain. It has been shown to reduce the growth of cancer cells and can be more effective at reducing inflammation than over-the-counter aspirin and ibuprofen.

GET COOKING: Add ¼ teaspoon to water when cooking rice. Put a ½ teaspoon into oil before sautéing vegetables or making a stir-fry. Add a dash to potato soup, chicken soup or chili. Sprinkle on roasted cauliflower or whip together with low-fat mayonnaise for a tasty egg salad. Lightly dust popcorn or other snack mixes for a new flavor sensation.

Ginger is commonly used to flavor cakes, cookies, breads and beverages. It’s also good in sauces and fruit dishes, and is often used heavily in Asian cooking.

HEALTH BOOST: For thousands of years, traditional healers worldwide have turned to ginger to help ease nausea of all kinds—such as morning sickness, motion sickness and upset stomach. Ginger may also help prevent and treat arthritis, asthma, heartburn, migraines and elevated triglycerides. Note: ginger can hinder blood clotting, so do not take it if you plan to have surgery.

GET COOKING: For motion sickness, suck on one to two pieces of crystallized ginger. Grate fresh ginger or sprinkle ¼ teaspoon of powdered ginger over cooked vegetables or tofu. Toss sliced ginger into a stir-fry. Rub ground ginger onto meat before grilling to help tenderize and add flavor. Steep a coin-size piece of fresh ginger in your tea. Sprinkle a little ground ginger and brown sugar on acorn squash or sweet potatoes before baking.

OREGANO

While many people think of pizza when they think of oregano, this wonderful herb can add a warm, balsamic and aromatic flavor to many different dishes, especially those of the Mediterranean cuisine.

HEALTH BOOST: A USDA study found that, gram for gram, oregano has the highest antioxidant content of 27 fresh culinary herbs! Oregano helps treat respiratory illnesses, calms digestion and loosens mucus.

GET COOKING: Perfect for use in many tomato-based recipes. Spice up tomato soup by adding ¾ teaspoon per can. Add ½ teaspoon to two cups of pasta or pizza sauce. (Substitute 1 teaspoon dried oregano for two teaspoons fresh.) Or, try adding 1/8 teaspoon to scrambled eggs and salad dressing.

**EYL WEBINAR:** “New Reasons to Season with Spices & Herbs”

DTE Energy employees, retirees and spouses are invited to view an online webinar, called “New Reasons to Season with Spices and Herbs,” conducted by Lillian Korbus, RD, IC®, RYT—DTE Energy Health Improvement Specialist. See why spices and herbs are much more than flavor enhancers!

To view a previously recorded version of this webinar, [http://redbrickhealthevents.webex.com](http://redbrickhealthevents.webex.com) and click “View Event Recordings” on the top right corner of the page.