Why should I include spices and herbs in my diet?
Spices have been shown to contain various health boosting properties such as lowering blood cholesterol and blood sugar, relieving pain from arthritis, disrupting growth of cancer and tumor cells, easing symptoms of the common cold and flu, improving digestion and even preventing Alzheimer’s disease. Aside from these health benefits, substituting spices in your diet for added salt, sugar and fat reduces your calorie consumption and risk of developing high blood pressure and diabetes.

What is the difference between a spice and herb?
Herbs and spices are both used to flavor food and the terms are often used interchangeably. However, there are some differences, mostly in the plants from which they are grown. Herbs are the leaves of the plant whereas spices are obtained from a plant’s roots, flowers, fruits, seeds or bark. Spices are typically more concentrated in taste than herbs and only a little is required to flavor a dish.

How can I use spices and herbs and what is the shelf life?
Spices and herbs can be used dried or fresh. Dried spices and herbs are more concentrated in flavor than fresh. A general rule is that 1 teaspoon of dried spices or herbs equals one tablespoon fresh. General shelf-life for dried spices and herbs is 1-2 years. Expect fresh herbs to last about 7 days.

What exactly is in spices and herbs that contribute to good health?
Spices contain phytonutrient compounds, which give spices their colors. These compounds act like antioxidants in our bodies to boost the immune system and fight off infection and inflammation. In addition, many spices contain high levels of the vitamins and minerals that our bodies need to stay healthy. Here’s a list of some of the nutrient rich spices and herbs and what they can do for you:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spice or Herb</th>
<th>Possible Health Benefits</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turmeric (main component of curry powder)</td>
<td>Stops the growth of cancer cells, detoxifies the liver and may protect against Alzheimer’s disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cinnamon</td>
<td>May lower triglycerides and blood sugar</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rosemary</td>
<td>May prevent certain cancers and protect against heart attacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thyme</td>
<td>May relieve PMS symptoms and coughs, and may promote heart and brain health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ginger</td>
<td>May relieve motion sickness and nausea, aid in digestion and ease joint pain from arthritis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oregano</td>
<td>May calm indigestion and inhibit bacterial growth and inflammation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloves</td>
<td>Can boost blood circulation, improve memory and fight cold and flu infections. Also an anti-inflammatory.</td>
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Source: Healing Spices by Bharat B. Aggarwal PhD with Debora Yost; www.mccormickscienceinstitute.com
Easy ways to incorporate spices and herbs into your diet!

- Instead of adding sugar to your tea, try adding ground ginger. Also try adding a stick of cinnamon to your tea while it’s steeping for extra sweetness.
- Add ground cinnamon to your oatmeal in the morning for a flavorful kick.
- For a new take on a plain old grilled cheese sandwich, try adding sliced tomato and ¼ teaspoon of oregano leaves.
- Use thyme leaves to season steamed or sautéed asparagus, along with a squeeze of lime juice and a dash of freshly ground black pepper.
- Make scented jasmine rice by adding four whole cloves to the water or stock to boil four servings of rice.
- Add a boost of flavor to pastas, sautéed vegetables or potatoes by adding garlic powder.
- Sprinkle ground ginger on warm winter vegetables like carrots, squashes and sweet potatoes.
- Bring out the earthy flavor of mushrooms by sautéing one pound of sliced mushrooms with one tablespoon of olive oil and sprinkling with thyme leaves.
- Spice up plain tomato soup with pure turmeric or curry powder.
- Add rosemary to baked chicken and potatoes for a fresh take on old favorites.
- Make a spread of plain yogurt mixed with half a teaspoon of curry powder. A great alternative to mayo to use on sandwiches!

Super Spice Trail Mix

Ingredients:
- ¼ cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 1 cup unsalted whole almonds
- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1 cup unsalted pecan halves
- 1 cup roasted salted pepitas (shelled pumpkin seeds)
- 1 cup salted shelled pistachios
- ¼ cup thawed apple juice concentrate
- 2/3 cup dried cherries or dries cranberries
- 2/3 cup golden raisins

Directions:
Preheat oven to 250° F. Mix brown sugar, cinnamon, ginger and paprika in bowl and set aside. Place almonds, oats, pecans, pepitas and pistachios in large bowl. Add thawed apple juice concentrate; toss until nuts are evenly coated. Sprinkle with spices; toss to coat well. Spread evenly on two, 15x10x1 inch baking pans. Bake 30 minutes or until the mixture starts turning brown. Stir the mixtures a few times during cooking. Cool completely on wire rack. Stir in cherries and raisins. Store in an airtight container.

Adapted from mccormick.com