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TWELVE DELICIOUS SPICES THAT HEAL

PAPRIKA...soothes headaches.

This spice is high in pain-relieving salicylic acid, the active ingredient in aspirin. In fact, Scottish researchers suggest that a daily serving of paprika may alleviate headaches better than a standard dose of the drug, without adverse side effects. **Try it with: chicken, bell peppers, lemons, potatoes, shellfish, mushrooms, and mac-and-cheese.**

FENNEL SEEDS...relieve bloat.

Fennel's antispasmodic compound *anethole* hinders painful contractions in the intestinal muscles. Studies at St. Petersburg State Medical Academy in Russia suggest that consuming the seed can soothe chronic belly cramps and bloating for 65 percent of women. **Try it with: pork, seafood, cabbage, oranges, raisins, rice, and lentils.**

GARLIC...enhances immunity.

This pungent herb contains *allicin*, a powerful antimicrobial agent that stimulates immune cells. In a British study, people who enjoyed garlic daily recovered from colds up to three days sooner than those who did not consume the bulb. **Try it with: potatoes, chicken, white beans, spinach, cheese, pork, and mushrooms.**

CURRY...alleviates aching joints.

The *curcumin* in curry inhibits the body's production of *prostaglandin E2*, an inflammatory compound that over-sensitizes nerves. According to German researchers, this blunts joint and muscle pain as effectively as prescription meds. **Try it with: cauliflower, winter squash, carrots, mangoes, chicken, beef, and potatoes.**

BLACK PEPPER...curbs heartburn.

Black pepper has been shown to stimulate the taste buds, which increases the stomach's secretion of hydrochloric acid. This substance speeds the breakdown of proteins and other food components to prevent heartburn and indigestion. **Try it with: goat cheese, honey, eggs, gingerbread, strawberries, biscuits, and beef.**

CINNAMON...prevents UTIs.

German researchers discovered that cinnamon's antimicrobial oil *cinnamaldehyde* kills 99.5 percent of *E. coli* bacteria (a leading cause of UTIs) in the urinary tract. The spice has also been shown to eradicate *Candida albicans*, the bug behind most yeast infections. **Try it with: chocolate, lamb, cranberries, nuts, dairy, and chili.**

MUSTARD SEEDS...improve sleep.

Sharp, spicy mustard seeds are a good source of tryptophan. This amino acid is a precursor of melatonin, a hormone that binds to sleep-regulating sites in the brain, quickly normalizing the body's circadian rhythm. **Try it with: salmon, chicken, marinated vegetables, sausages, green beans, cheese, and beer.**

CLOVES...rev metabolism.

The trace mineral *manganese* in cloves enhances thyroid function by speeding the conversion of the inactive hormone *thyroxine* to the active *triiodothyronine*. This results in faster fat burn, extra energy, and brighter moods. **Try it with: pumpkin, acorn squash, ham, beef, oranges, and baked beans.**

CORIANDER...lowers cholesterol.

These seeds increase the activity of *plasma lecithin cholesterol acyltransferase*, an enzyme that breaks down cholesterol so it can be flushed from the body. Researchers in India report that this can lower LDL and VLDL ("bad") cholesterol by up to 63 percent. **Try it with: steak, curry, cucumbers, chickpeas, and citrus fruit.**

CAYENNE...eases congestion.

This pepper's fiery *capsaicin* impedes the action of *substance P*, a neuropeptide that's linked to inflammation in the sinuses. What's more, capsaicin thins mucus so it can more easily be cleared from nasal passages. **Try it with: eggs, root vegetables, nuts, seafood, greens, Cheddar cheese, and corn.**

GINGER...relieves nausea.

The *gingerols* and *shogaols* in the ginger possess heat-inducing properties that calm intestinal muscle spasms. Scientists at Thailand's Thammasat University discovered that the spice alleviates nausea as effectively as motion-sickness drugs. **Try it with: citrus fruit, melons, rice, pears, fish, broccoli, pumpkin, and sweet potatoes.**

CUMIN...boosts energy.

Smoky-tasting cumin is rich in iron, a mineral that combats fatigue by stimulating the production of red blood cells. Plus, cumin's anti-inflammatory *cuminaldehyde* inhibits the buildup of harmful protein deposits in the brain to boost mental energy. **Try it with: beef, eggs, chicken, potatoes, beets, greens, and grains.**

HEALTH BONUS!

Mood-boosting nutrient: Phenols

The antioxidant phenols in certain spices ward off the free-radical damage that can hamper the brain's production of calming neurotransmitters like serotonin.