



Chillies are the spice of life

CHILLI: good for killing cancer cells and numbing pain
A study at Nottingham University has found that capsaicin (found in most chilli peppers) triggers the death of cancer cells by attacking mitochondria (the part of the cells that generate energy) without harming surrounding

Peppers have been found to kill cancer cells. **Alice Hart-Davis** discovers that other spices also get the lab's seal of approval

healthy tissue. Does the latest research mean that eating vast quantities of chilli pepper will prevent or treat cancer? It's too

early to tell. Cancer Research UK says: "Pepper extracts killed cancer cells grown in a lab, but these have not yet been tested to see if they are safe and effective in humans." Chilli peppers also have a reputation as powerful painkillers.

TURMERIC: good for the liver and Alzheimer's
Prized for its anti-inflammatory effects on the bronchial system, turmeric helps to relieve colds, coughs and asthma. Curcumin, the main active ingredient, is a powerful antioxidant and appears to have an anti-cancer effect. It has also been shown to reduce amyloid plaques in the brain that cause Alzheimer's. In India, it has been used for centuries as an antiseptic, and is also used to strengthen the liver, aid digestion, ease arthritic pain, lower cholesterol and prevent blood clots.



Alamy

Hot hope: red chillies containing cancer-fighting capsaicin

GARLIC: good for infections and verrucas
Garlic has for centuries been regarded as a miracle-worker, boosting the immune system and killing off infections. Its main effective ingredient, allicin, is thought to play a role in preventing cancer. Garlic is used to lower high blood pressure and cholesterol levels. "It needs to be taken raw," advises herbalist Penny Povey. And it's the best thing for getting rid of a verruca, advises Dr Shamim Daya of the Wholistic Medical Centre. "Make a paste of fresh garlic. Apply it to the verruca, under a plaster, for a couple of nights."

GINGER: good for rheumatism and morning sickness
This spice has a particular ability to improve circulation. The key phytochemicals in ginger react with the unstable free radical molecules that can cause tissue damage and joint inflammation. These are responsible for ginger's reputation in helping ease rheumatism and arthritis. Ginger is traditionally well-known for reducing nausea, including morning sickness.

CINNAMON: good for diabetes and bad breath
Antibacterial and antiseptic, cinnamon has traditionally

been used to treat toothache and fight bad breath. Regular use is said to keep away the common cold and help digestion. The active chemical in cinnamon is MHCP, which helps stimulate deactivated fat cells in patients with type II diabetes into responding to the presence of insulin.

CORIANDER: good for arthritis and digestion
It can help relieve arthritis pain. A natural bactericide, it can also prevent infection in minor wounds, while its odour-fighting compounds have been used in some deodorants. Coriander seeds are good for the digestive system, according to Ayurvedic medicine backed by recent research.

CLOVES: good for toothache and bronchitis
Biting on cloves can cause a numb feeling in the mouth, thanks to eugenol, the main active component of clove oil, which makes it an effective and instant remedy for toothache. Cloves have antibacterial qualities, too and are used as expectorants to help relieve congestion associated with bronchial infections.