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Top Spices and Superfoods to Add Years to Your Life

By Dr. Mercola | November 6th, 2017

Two Potent Anti-Inflammatory Spices

While several of the foods already listed could belong in this section, two potent anti-inflammatory spices worthy of special mention are:

1. Turmeric, nicknamed the "spice of life," has a long history of medicinal use for Ayurvedic medicine and traditional Chinese medicine. Its bioactive compound, curcumin, has been found to help maintain a healthy digestive system, modulate some 700 genes, positively control more than 160 different physiological pathways, improve the orderliness of cell membranes, and directly interact with inflammatory molecules to help lower inflammation.

2. Ginger is also well-known for its medicinal qualities. The Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences recently published a review showing ginger may protect against a wide range of chronic diseases, in part due to its beneficial effects on oxidative stress and inflammation.

Like turmeric, ginger has also been found to have anticancer activity, driving "mitochondrially mediated apoptosis" (programmed cell death), decreasing the size of prostate tumors without disturbing normal tissues.

Two Immune-Boosting Superfoods

Your immune system is the first-line defense against all disease, and a majority of your immune function resides or starts in your gut. Hence, all the gut-healthy foods already mentioned will help boost your immune function as well. In addition to those, the following two categories are worthy of special note:

1. Allium vegetables — garlic and onions. The unique scent emitted by allium vegetables when cut comes from sulfur-containing compounds such as allicin, which have many health-promoting effects. Studies have demonstrated garlic may inhibit a vast array of diseases by reducing inflammation, boosting immune function and improving cardiovascular health.

It's also been shown to combat at least 14 different kinds of cancer cells, including brain, lung, breast, gastric and pancreatic cancer cells. Sprouted garlic and fermented, black garlic are two variations you can try for variety's sake as well. Both have been shown to provide additional health benefits over regular, fresh garlic.

Onions also have a wealth of beneficial properties; they're antiallergic, antihistaminic, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant all rolled into one. Polyphenols are plant compounds recognized for their disease prevention, antioxidant and antiaging properties, and onions have a particularly high concentration of them.

Onions are especially rich in polyphenol flavonoids called quercetin, a powerful antioxidant with antihistamine and anti-inflammatory properties that may help fight chronic diseases like allergies, heart disease and cancer.

2. Mushrooms. Aside from being rich in protein, fiber, vitamins B and C, calcium and minerals, mushrooms are excellent sources of antioxidants, including antioxidants that are unique to mushrooms, such as ergothioneine,

recognized as a "master antioxidant." A study in the journal Nature discussed the importance of ergothioneine, which appears to have a very specific role in protecting your DNA from oxidative damage.

Some of the most potent immunosupportive agents are also found in mushrooms, which is one reason why they're so beneficial for both preventing and treating cancer. Long-chain polysaccharides, particularly alpha and beta glucan molecules, are primarily responsible for the mushrooms' beneficial effect on your immune system.

In human nutrition intervention studies, dried shiitake mushrooms were found to have a beneficial, modulating effect on immune system function.