

## Spices that help you lose weight

India, particularly South India, is known for its spices: cinnamon, pepper, cardamom, turmeric, red pepper, among others. These aromatic spices have long been used to cure common ailments and are in fact, in Indian tradition, hailed as “medicines of the kitchen”.

The west has woken up to this fact – some of these spices are now being sold in tablet form to help alleviate symptoms of many lifestyle diseases like diabetes, hypertension and cholesterol build-up.

Super foods like kale and broccoli are not easily available in India – if you don’t count supermarkets. To keep off weight, improve absorption of sugar into the bloodstream or reduce harmful cholesterol, adding or increasing the amount of these spices in your diet will go a long way in helping you feel light and energetic.

However, do take note that a doctor’s advice is of utmost importance before you increase your intake of these five spices. Excess intake might lead to other complications.

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Although we're inclined to scour the Web in search of the best diets and meal plans, the truth is, some of the tools to weight-loss success are already on your spice rack! Here are five ingredients that not only add flavor to your favorite dishes but can help in your battle against the bulge.

### 1. *Cinnamon*

A 2003 study published in *Diabetes Care* showed that as little as one teaspoon of cinnamon per day can boost the body's weight-loss ability by reducing blood sugar and promoting healthier processing of carbohydrates. It also lowers LDL cholesterol (bad cholesterol) by seven to 27% and total cholesterol by 12 to 26%. Plus, cinnamon has been shown to prevent the metabolic syndrome commonly seen in pre-diabetics. But before you go on piling the spice by spoonful, note that cinnamon contains a chemical called *coumarin*, which can lead to liver damage if consumed in very large amounts.

### 2. *Cayenne*

The main ingredient in spicy cayenne—*capsaicin*, which is also found in other hot peppers—has long been studied for its fat-burning abilities and thermogenic properties (the stimulating of the central nervous system to produce heat in the body, leading to an increase in calorie burning). In fact, Nicholas Perricone, M.D., cites several of these studies in his wildly popular *The Perricone Weight-Loss Diet* and concludes that capsaicin acts as an appetite suppressant. Many think that cayenne pepper promotes weight loss because it's simply difficult to overindulge in spicy food. However, later studies performed by the *Journal of Obesity* also found that the spice increases fat oxidation, “ramps up energy expenditure, and stimulates activity by the sympathetic nervous system”—all which help the body to shed

excess weight. Not a fan of fiery cuisine? Not to worry! Research has found that cayenne's ability to reduce appetite is equally effective whether ingested as food or in capsule form.

### *3. Black Pepper*

Among the dozens of health benefits of this common household ingredient is its ability to improve digestion and promote the absorption of nutrients in tissues all over the body. Plus, its main component—*piperine* (which gives pepper its pungent taste)—boosts fat metabolism by as much as 8% for several hours after ingesting it. If you want your pepper to pack the most punch, use freshly ground pepper, which has the most concentrated amounts of piperine.

### *4. Mustard Seed*

Like the other hot ingredients on this list, spicy mustard helps boost metabolism and allows you to burn fat more quickly, thanks in part to its thermogenic properties. Scientists at England's Oxford Polytechnic Institute recently found that eating just one teaspoon of hot mustard can “boost metabolism 20 to 25% for several hours after eating, resulting in an additional burn of about 45 calories if a 700-calorie meal is consumed.”

### *5. Ginger*

Long used for its medicinal properties, ginger is also an effective diuretic (a substance that increases the elimination of urine). It improves gastric mobility (i.e. it pushes food and waste through the digestive system) and hinders the absorption of cholesterol. Although according to the Mayo Clinic, more study is needed, preliminary evidence suggests that this versatile spice helps to increase metabolism.