

Best Herbs to Fight Cancer

Turmeric

The spice turmeric contains curcumin, which gives curry powder its yellow color. “Curcumin is one of the most powerful anti-inflammatories identified to this day,” says Amanda Bontempo, RD, CDN, an ambulatory oncology dietitian at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx, N.Y. Cancer tumors have a network of blood vessels that feed them, explains Bontempo, and curcumin can work against these blood vessels and essentially choke the cancer cells to death. Mixing turmeric with black pepper and olive oil can activate curcumin's power. With its mild and pleasant flavor, turmeric can be used as a dry rub on chicken or even vegetables. A teaspoon or two can also be added to soups, sauces, or stews — a tasty way to practice cancer prevention.



Garlic

Along with onions, shallots, scallions, and leeks, garlic is an allium vegetable that may help prevent cancer, especially of the stomach. Allium vegetables contain organosulfur compounds, the chemical that causes eye-tearing when they're chopped. Organosulfur has immune-strengthening and anti-carcinogenic qualities. Garlic is a versatile cooking essential. It can be sautéed in a tablespoon of olive oil and served with whole grain bread or baked in the oven and then mashed into a spread. It's delicious added to vegetables and meats dishes.



Ginger



Another weapon in your kitchen's cancer prevention arsenal, fresh ginger contains gingerol while dried ginger forms zingerone. “Gingerol and zingerone are thought to have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, and therefore may be protective against cancer,” explains Bethany Smith, RD, a nutritionist at Georgia Cancer Specialists in Atlanta. Store ginger in the freezer and grate a bit into lentils or rice when cooking. Steeping a few thin slices in hot water for 10 to 15 minutes can create a calming tea that may help with nausea and decrease cancer risk.

Black Pepper



Actually, a berry, black pepper contains the active substance piperine, a naturally occurring chemical compound with strong antioxidant properties. A study conducted by scientists at the University of Michigan Comprehensive Cancer and published in the journal *Breast Cancer Research and Treatment*, found pepper along with turmeric — inhibited the growth of cancerous stem cells of breast tumors. However, the spice didn't destroy healthy cells. Pepper

can add flavor to a whole host of dishes, from scrambled eggs to sliced tomatoes to soups and casseroles. Plus, it's an all-around healthful alternative to table salt.

Cayenne Pepper

“Cayenne contains capsaicin, known to be a powerful antioxidant,” says Bontempo. “Some lab studies have shown that capsaicin is toxic to cancer cells.” One study by researchers at the University of California at Los Angeles School of Medicine, found capsaicin stifled the growth of prostate cancer cells, and even had the power to kill them off. In addition to fighting cancer, cayenne pepper also adds a tasty kick to a number of foods. Try it on popcorn and in dip to spice up snacks or mix it with other spices for a smoky-heat taste.



Oregano



Oregano contains carvacrol, a molecule that may help offset the spread of cancer cells by working as a natural disinfectant. Carvacrol is also present in marjoram, mint, thyme, basil, and parsley. Marinating foods with oregano may also reduce the formation of heterocyclic amines (HCAs), chemicals created when meat is cooked at high temperatures. HCAs have been found to increase cancer risk in animals. Oregano can be added to marinades, pizza, pasta, and tuna salad, just

to name a few dishes.
