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Nutrition Services

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Food as Medicine

Part #5 ~ Spices & Snacks

This month we finish our “Food as Medicine” series with items that can be sprinkled on your meals or consumed between meals. Many of these food and drinks have been used in traditional Eastern medicine and healing practices for centuries. More recently, we in the Western world have begun to adopt these items into our meal patterns.

HERBS & SPICES- Using these flavorings will make your food tastier and may help prevent illness and disease. The potential health benefits are endless, but make sure you are eating the real thing. Taking these herbs & spices in pill or supplement form has NOT been shown to have the same disease fighting potential

Garlic- proven to help lower cholesterol levels in many, and is rich in cancer-fighting phytochemicals

Ginger- high in magnesium, vitamin C and potassium, it can help reduce symptoms of nausea & vertigo

Licorice- has anti-inflammatory properties and may help in the treatment of heartburn

Sage- has been shown to possibly help with hot flashes and night sweats

Turmeric- can reduce inflammation, help relieve pain from arthritis, and promote heart health

Cinnamon- is high in antioxidants and can help control blood sugar level in those with diabetes

Cayenne Pepper- can help relieve sinus congestion from colds, the flu or seasonal allergies, as well as act as a surprising digestive aid

ALCOHOL- Many studies have shown the potential for health benefits with moderate consumption of alcohol. One drink per day for women and 1-2 drinks per day for men may help control blood pressure and promote heart health. Red wine especially contains compounds called polyphenols which are heart protective.

- One drink is equivalent to 1 ½ ounces (a standard shot) of liquor, a 12-ounce beer or wine cooler, or 5 ounces of table wine
- Make sure you remember that alcoholic drinks add extra calories to your daily intake. The standard beer provides approximately 150 calories, and mixed drinks using juice and/or cream can have over 300 calories per drink.
- Never drink alcohol on an empty stomach as it can increase symptoms of intoxication and lead to digestive upset
- Remember more is NOT better! Consuming alcohol in excess has negative effects and is very detrimental to your overall health.

CHOCOLATE- Not only delicious and a favorite treat of many, chocolate is rich in iron, magnesium, copper, and an excellent source of antioxidants. Quality chocolate has been shown to potentially lower blood pressure, raise good cholesterol levels, help brain function, and protect your heart. The key with chocolate is the darker the better! To have the best health benefits, choose chocolate that contains 70% cocoa (Lindt and Ghirardelli make delicious options), and limit intake to 1-3 ounces per day. Be mindful that eating chocolate is going to contribute calories however, so make sure to adjust your other food intake accordingly to avoid weight gain.