

# Cinnamon, wonderful cinnamon



## NUTRITION NOTES

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Spices used to flavor food are just as important as the food itself. They can make the difference between a bland concoction or a culinary creation that delights the senses - taste and smell in particular. If you make a healthy food pleasurable to eat, let's face it, you are going to eat it more often.

When it comes to spices, cinnamon is a star. One of the oldest known spices, it is mentioned in the Bible, was used in ancient Egypt and is mentioned in 2700 year old Chinese botanical medicine texts.

It was one of the first commodities traded regularly between the Near East and Europe and was once considered more valuable than gold. It's been with us for a long time.

Cinnamon is a fall-winter spice, often paired with nutmeg, ginger or cloves. All four have a warming effect. It comes from the bark of the cinnamon tree and is available as a "quill" or as ground powder. There are two types, Chinese and Ceylon, the Ceylon type being slightly sweeter.

Who doesn't have fond memories of cinnamon-spiked apple pie baking in the oven, cinnamon hot apple cider or cinnamon-sprinkled French toast.

But there is more to cinnamon than just a pleasant taste. New research has shown it to be a spice that supports health in numerous ways. Its healing qualities come from essential oils in the bark.

Most recently, cinnamon has been shown to have a beneficial effect on Type II diabetes by affecting the insulin receptors in cells and glucose transport. Just 1/2 tsp a day can significantly lower blood sugar.

Not only that, cinnamon can lower triglycerides and LDL cholesterol, make blood platelets less sticky, and can lower systolic blood pressure contributing to cardiovascular health.

It can help with irritable bowel disease by relieving constipation and diarrhea. Because cinnamon contains significant amounts of calcium and fibre, it binds with bile salts, preventing damage to the colon and colon cancer.

Wait, there's more. Cinnamon can inhibit harmful bacterial growth like e coli in food and can even be used as an alternative to traditional food preservatives.

It is anti-inflammatory and can significantly ease arthritis pain. And it has antioxidant qualities.

If you feel a cold or flu coming on, a tea made of cinnamon and fresh ginger can lessen symptoms

or eliminate them altogether. It has been known to help with sinus congestion.

Want to boost brain function? Cinnamon can do that too. Studies have shown that just smelling cinnamon can boost cognitive processing attention and both long and short term memory.

Just 1 tsp of cinnamon has 28 mg of calcium, 1 mg iron, more than 1 gram of fibre and vitamin C, K and manganese.

Traditional Mediterranean dishes like those found in Greece, Morocco or Tunisia use liberal amounts of cinnamon. Is it any wonder that Mediterranean diets are considered the healthiest in the world?

It's easy to add cinnamon to your diet with a little imagination and adventurous experimentation. Cinnamon sticks simmered with soymilk can be a tasty cold weather drink. Add cinnamon to black bean chili or an Indian curry for a unique and hearty taste. Sprinkle it in stir fries and the vegetables become aromatic.

Cinnamon - it's just an enticing spice.

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