



## Spices for Health - Cinnamon

July 23, 2014

Kelly LeSage, MS, RD, LDN

How you flavor your foods can have huge impact on your health. Many of the spices we use to enhance our foods have powerful medicinal benefits.

Cinnamon is one of those spices that has amazing benefits and a lot of research behind it.

Check out these other blogs on [turmeric](#) and [ginger](#).

**Cinnamon** is one of the oldest spices known to man; it's medicinal use dates back to 2,700 B.C. Cinnamon is the bark of the cinnamon tree, which when dried, rolls into that familiar tubular form. We can find cinnamon in either its whole form as cinnamon sticks or as ground powder.

While there are approximately one hundred varieties of cinnamon, Ceylon and Cassia cinnamon are the leading varieties consumed. Cassia is the most common here in the US.

The *many* benefits of cinnamon include:

- **Anticlotting** actions
- **Antioxidant** actions
- **Anti-microbial** and **anti-fungal** activity
- Strengthening the immune system
- May help **relieve headaches** and **migraines**
- **Lower triglycerides** and **cholesterol**
- **Lower blood glucose** levels
- **Boost cognitive function** and memory (just by smelling it!)

Many of us are interested in its affects regarding blood glucose regulation. There is a lot of new research on this subject. Some studies are showing that as little as ½ tsp per day of cinnamon can reduce blood glucose levels in those with Type 2 Diabetes. Studies are showing that it may help reduce blood glucose levels by slowing the rate at which the stomach empties after meals, which reduces the rise in blood glucose after eating. It may also increase the cells sensitivity to insulin, increasing the cells ability to use glucose from our blood.

With cinnamon, more isn't always better. The cassia cinnamon can be toxic at large amounts. It contains a compound called coumarin. Coumarin is responsible for some of cinnamons health benefits like its anti-clotting and anti-fungal properties, but in excess it can do damage to the liver and kidneys. So make sure to **enjoy cinnamon in moderation** on your food, not in supplement form to be on the safe side.

Cinnamon can be used in sweet or savory dishes. For a special morning treat try sprinkling some in your coffee or on your oatmeal or yogurt. For a savory taste try it with a mixture of smoked paprika and chipotle powder on chicken or beef for something a little different.

Just like any other spice, cinnamon should be kept in a tightly sealed container in a cool, dark, dry place. Ground cinnamon will keep for about six months, while cinnamon sticks will stay fresh for about a year.