

## Spices and Herbs as the Important Functional Foods

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### Editorial

Functional food approach to herbs and spices could start with how they are used in the diet. There is no single definition of functional foods, but the term is used in a variety of ways, such as scientific research, technical innovation, food marketing, and food standards regulation. Functional foods are described as "foods that provide benefits beyond basic nutrition" from a scientific standpoint. This description is based on the concepts of food (i.e., a recognisable unit of intake in contrast to drugs), benefits (which necessitates empirical evidence), and "basic nutrition" (a concept open to interpretation). Simple nutrition can, in some ways, reflect the current state of nutrition awareness and practise. Meeting vitamin and mineral requirements (which have prescribed reference values) may thus be called basic nutrition. The underlying assumption is that these nutrients are needed for normal bodily function to continue. However, today's research on food components is expanding beyond principles like preventing clinical deficiency and preserving homeostasis to provide an increasing understanding of how food components actively communicate with the body to promote health and avoid abnormality and overt disease.

Herbs and spices play a role in this scenario in a variety of ways. The emphasis of this supplement is on their function in the diet rather than on their use as medications. Identifying specific bioactive compounds to aid in the identification of target benefits will be a part of establishing this position. The food itself (supplements), a meal dependent on the food (acute effects), or the food as part of a whole diet in which the observed benefits can be attributed to the prescribed combination will then be studied. Many clues to this creation can be found in the common use of foods in different cultures. Certain meals in traditional Thai cuisine, for example, have a cultural history of promoting health through their combination of herbs, spices, and other ingredients, so dietary recommendations should apply to dishes rather than single foods, as we do in Western societies (which

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tend to focus on targeted nutrients being delivered by core food groups). The real difficulty arises when it comes to identifying benefits and presenting scientific evidence to back them up. The evidence for the health benefits of herbs and spices in the fields of cardiovascular and metabolic health, healthy ageing and cancer, and mental health and cognition is discussed in this supplement. It's also taken into account to incorporate nutrition information about herbs and spices into public health recommendations and dietary practises. The supplement discusses the various ways in which the functionality of herbs and spices can be considered, laying the groundwork for future studies and cultivating an understanding of herbs and spices' possible contributions to health and wellbeing. The versatility of herbs and spices will be shown by consideration of their properties as foods from a dietary standpoint. The true benefits of including them in one's diet, as with most foods, are likely to emerge with a greater understanding of the health attributes best supported by food, as well as statistical advancements addressing the evidence base for their effects. These advancements are well underway, thanks to evidence-based mechanisms for substantiating food-related health statements. Currently, guidelines for the consumption of foods high in bioactive ingredients, such as herbs and spices, are required. Over time, we should expect to see more clinical evidence supporting the advantages of herbs and spices in overall health maintenance and disease prevention.