

CINNAMON BALANCES BLOOD SUGAR AND LOWERS CHOLESTEROL

That lovely fragrance of cinnamon comes from the bark of the cinnamon tree, a moderately large evergreen that is native to Sri Lanka. It has been around for at least 2000 years. According to the Bible, Moses used cinnamon to make holy oil (Exodus 20:33). Legend has it that the emperor, Nero, burned a year's supply of cinnamon at his wife's funeral. Cinnamon, known botanically as *Cinnamomum zeylanicum*, has the ability to have a positive effect on blood sugar and cholesterol.

Aside from adding spice and being inexpensive and easy to obtain, cinnamon's glory may lie in its ability to regulate blood sugar. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has published several cinnamon studies on human beings. Findings report that about one half teaspoon a day results in an impressive improvement in blood sugar. Cinnamon works by enhancing the body's ability to use the insulin it already produces, especially in muscle tissue.

Cinnamon has also demonstrated a highly beneficial impact on cholesterol. Specifically, it lowers the LDL, more commonly known as the "bad cholesterol."

Across the board, cinnamon is known to ease intestinal cramps, relieve gas, promote movement of food through the digestive system and act as a muscle relaxant. It has obtained some popularity as a method to relieve both menstrual and night time leg cramps as well.

Another helpful property of cinnamon is its antibacterial effect. It is especially useful for fighting intestinal germs. Some people claim it can ward off mild food poisoning.

The only form of cinnamon that is truly useful for humans is powdered bark, in capsule form. The oil contains compounds that can be harmful. Doses of 1000mg daily have been shown to make a difference in both blood sugar and LDL.

Consumers need to know that the powdered cinnamon found in supermarkets is far too old to have any healing benefit. The most efficacious method for cinnamon intake is a commercial preparation designed for that purpose.

Although the oil can be harmful to humans if ingested regularly, it is useful in other ways. Just as cinnamon fights intestinal "bugs", it also fights the real thing. A few drops of cinnamon oil on strips of white cotton ribbon, white cotton bias tape or plain paper towels hung in windows can be an effective insect repellent.

Cinnamon should be part of a daily eating plan, suggests A. Kahn, M.D., a diabetes researcher who has studied the effects of cinnamon on blood sugar. For the best effects, however, it takes more than a sprinkle on your morning oatmeal.

Kahn, A. *Diabetes Care*. December 2003; vol 26 (12): pp 3215-3218.
Qin, B., et al. *Diabetes Research and Clinical Practice*. July 2003