

# Functional Foods

## CUMIN

### "The Sweet-Smelling Spice"

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1. Cumin is an aromatic herb and is native to India, Iran, the Mediterranean and Egypt. It was introduced to the Americans by Spanish and Portuguese colonists.
2. Although thought of as a seed, it is the fruit of the cumin plant.

### What is in cumin?

Cumin contains **phytochemicals** such as the **flavonoids** (those present in fruits and vegetables), and adds health benefits even in small amounts, which we include as seasonings <sup>1</sup>.



**Flavonoids give fruits and vegetables its bright colors.**

**Phytochemicals** include different types of plant-based compounds that have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory function.

Adding cumin to a calorie-restricted diet reduced weight, BMI and waist circumference, and improved body composition <sup>3</sup>. \*\*\*

**Blood glucose and lipid levels:** Most of the evidence comes from India and Iran, where fasting blood glucose and blood glycosylated hemoglobin (HbA1c) improved but did not show an effect on lipid profile <sup>4, 5</sup>.\* Further research is needed to confirm the evidence.

**Inflammation:** Black cumin is another variety used in traditional medicine. Trials have shown that it improved liver function and fat breakdown.<sup>6</sup>\*\*\*

### Strength of evidence

\*\*\* Strong \*\* Moderate \* Basic

### What do studies say about the health benefits?

**Body weight:** Multiple studies have confirmed that cumin has a positive impact by reducing body weight, body mass index (BMI), and waist circumference in overweight and obese people by increasing insulin function and preventing fat accumulation <sup>2</sup>. \*\*\*

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## How is cumin traditionally used?

You may also see cumin linked to the following health benefits:

- Aids digestion
- Boosts immunity
- Reduces stress
- Enhances anti-microbial activity
- Protects cells <sup>7</sup>.

## How much cumin is safe to consume?

- 1.5–3 grams/day, which is about  $\frac{1}{2}$  - tsp/ 1 day, with yogurt at two meals <sup>3</sup>.
- No toxic effects have been reported in culinary amounts.
- Usage of supplements or concentrated extracts should be under professional guidance.
- Functional foods, including cumin, are not meant to substitute for a healthy diet, nor should they be used to replace prescribed medication.
- Effects may vary from person to person.

## How to use cumin

**Flavoring :** Add cumin powder to your favorite yogurt. Use cumin powder or seeds as a flavoring in dishes like curries, rice dishes, soups, stews, breads, roasted vegetables, and desserts.

**Tea :** Brew cumin seeds in hot water to create a soothing and potentially digestive tea.

**Meat preparation and products :** Use seeds or powder as natural flavoring and antioxidant in meat preparations and products.

“A partnership of Nevada counties; University of Nevada, Reno; and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.”

## Resources

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