

Use herbs, spices to keep cold at bay

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KANPUR: With the advancement of medical science, the people are forgetting the use of natural herbs for prevention of certain diseases. Even the doctors believe that natural herbs are best to tackle winter ailments.

The Ayurvedic doctors believe that natural herbs and home-made remedies are always effective. "Spices are a treasure trove of health benefits. Many spices have properties that can keep several ailments at bay," said Dr SK Pandey, principal of Jawaharlal Nehru Homeopathic Medical College.

Turmeric or 'haldi' is on top of the list of spices. "This Indian spice is considered as a natural antibiotic. A host of medical studies claim that its anti-inflammatory action is sometimes better than cortisone and phenylbutazone treatment," Dr SK Pandey said. He added that turmeric is frequently used in Indian cuisine. One can also add it to milk or honey in order to avoid cough.

Cinnamon, one of the oldest known spices, is on the second position. It can stimulate blood circulation, thus inducing warmth in body. It is the perfect spice for the cold climate as it helps in strengthening the immune system. A pinch of powdered cinnamon and a teaspoon of honey in warm water in the morning can protect one from cold.

"Sometimes, it is mixed with ginger to tackle common cold. Cinnamon boiled in hot water will keep the winter trouble away," Dr RS Prajapati, an ayurvedic and unani expert said.

Another useful spice is cardamom. Tea mixed with cloves and cardamom is helpful in preventing cough and cold. The grandmother's remedy is to boil two or three cardamoms in a cup of water and add a teaspoon of honey to drink before going to bed.

It is said to clear nose and chest congestions. The aroma uplifts the spirits and veer away depression.

Cloves are at number four in the chart of natural herbs. "Ayurvedic medication relies on cloves to treat respiratory problems. Chewing a clove is said to help ease irritations in the throat and chewing a burnt one is said to tackle cough," added Dr Prajapati.

Another spice ginger is an easily available natural herb. Indian housewives often prepare ginger-garlic paste and use it cooking. Soups are perfect for winters. Add fresh ginger pieces to chicken soups and relish with garlic. It has anti-inflammatory capacities and helps in fighting throat and chest infections.

"Chewing a ginger piece everyday will keep various winter ailments a bay. A piece of garlic is also helpful in making the immune system strong," added Dr Prajapati.

Ayurvedic experts pointed out black pepper and jaggery is also very helpful in fighting cold.