

**Cardamom**

**By Ann Gerhardt MD**

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Cardamom, a relative of ginger, may be green or black, has a distinctive floral taste and may reduce oxidative or mental stress, and blood pressure. I've seen claims that it freshens the breath and prevents dental cavities. High in manganese and a weak source of calcium, vitamins C and A, iron, zinc, various oils and magnesium, it is best to consume added to food as a spice, rather than a large dose as a supplement (more is not better), which can cause rashes and increase stomach acid, heartburn, diarrhea and gallstones.

Some people have reported addiction to it, but it contains no addictive chemicals, and those people may just like the flavor. It is used in garam masala, chai tea (along with cinnamon, ginger, star anise and cloves) and middle Eastern dishes. It tastes good with pomegranate, pistachio and coffee and in baked goods.

I tried to chew cardamom seed pods to avoid dental problems, but pods are hard, and the husk is difficult to spit out. Ground cardamom, however, tastes delicious in holiday cookies and rice dishes with lemon or mint. I'm sorry to say that I consume it often and it has not rid me of stress, but I am only one trial, and my results won't apply to everyone. I wouldn't try huge amounts {more than 400-500 mg} to achieve a benefit, however, since I prefer to avoid stomach complaints and manganese neurotoxicity.

A spice poem by Ann Gerhardt MD

A cook without cardamom is unadventurous.

Salt and pepper foods are ubiquitous,

A turkey parslied, saged, rosemaried and thymed is sumptuous,

While nuts, cumin, cardamom, and clove are salubrious!