- Alternative medicine

Good Health



KITCHEN CURES FOR SPRING HEALTH BOTHERS

These pantry staples are powerful healers that will help you feel your best all season

BY BRENDA KEARNS

FIGHTS ALLERGY FLARES

A spicy sip

Few things will wreck a warm, sunny day faster than a nose full of pollen. What can help? A daily cup of fresh ginger tea. Experts say the compounds that give ginger its spicy kick are natural antihistamines. And in a study out of Thailand, a daily dose of these allergy tamers prevented congestion, sneezing and other symptoms as effectively as Claritin did. To make your own tea, simmer 2 tsp. of grated ginger in 8 oz. of hot water for 5 minutes, then strain and sweeten to taste.

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PREVENTS SPRING COLDS

Sweet potatoes

Up to 50% of us will encounter a nasty spring cold virus in the next few weeks. Thankfully, working ¾ cup of sweet potatoes into your daily diet can help you breeze through this germy season illness-free. Scientists reporting in the journal *Preventive Nutrition and Food Science* credit the carotenoids in these colorful spuds, which they say energize immune cells, tamp down immunity-weakening inflammation and heal and strengthen the lining of the respiratory tract.





ENDS ACHINESS

Rosemary soaks

If a busy day of yard work leaves you sore, slipping into a rosemary-infused bath could provide relief in 15 minutes. How? Scientists reporting in the *Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine* say warm water boosts healing blood flow to strained muscles and joints. Plus, a compound in the herb dials down the production of pain-triggering inflammation. To do: Mix ¼ cup of dried rosemary and 1 cup of boiled water in a glass jar; steep for 20 minutes, then strain the liquid into your tub.

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RESTORES STAMINA

Citrus

Wish your energy level matched Mother Nature's right now? Try tossing the peel of your favorite citrus fruit into a pot of water and simmering it on the stove. Inhaling citrus' aromatic oils activates genes that produce focus-sharpening brain waves, suggests a study in the journal *Brain and Behavior.* Plus, citrus oils energize a key brain region that can chase away sluggishness and fatigue within minutes of the first sniff.



BANISHES STRESS

Black pepper

As the days get longer so do our to-do lists. The good news? If a go-go-go day is making you feel rattled, inhaling the sharp, spicy aroma of black pepper could calm your nerves in 20 seconds, Japanese scientists say. The credit goes to black pepper's volatile oils, which energize the autonomic nervous system—a series of nerves that block stress hormone release, calm a racing heart and relax tight muscles.



SMOOTHS SKIN

Safflower oil

Some 64% of us are battling dry, flaky or rashy skin these days. And if you'd love to shake off that winter-weary vibe and restore your skin's youthful summertime glow, try dabbing it with a few drops of safflower oil twice daily. This oil boasts rich stores of linoleic acid, an essential fat that Canadian researchers say quickly seals in moisture and fast-tracks tissue repair, improving skin texture, smoothness and health in as little as one week.