

Ask Leyla: Can eating a lot of spicy foods cause ulcers?



Q: My family loves spicy foods. The hotter the better. Hummus has to be jalapeno style, etc. We enjoy the spices of Indian cuisine as well. Is this okay or are we setting ourselves up for ulcers or other health problems?

A: Spicy foods are wonderful and have healing properties. The capsaicin in cayenne, jalapeno and other hot peppers and chilis works to inhibit the COX-2 enzyme—a known cause of inflammation in arthritis and inflammatory conditions. Please note, however, that peppers are a Nightshade and should be avoided by those with arthritic conditions. Topical preparations like creams for temporary pain relief however, may be well tolerated.

Capsaicin may also benefit in weight loss, boosting metabolism by raising body temperature. Also, when eating very spicy foods, you'll likely eat less—at least you may eat more slowly.

Curcumin, found in turmeric—a staple in Indian cooking including spicy curries—has powerful anti-inflammatory properties and may inhibit certain cancers according to the latest research.

Spicy foods will not cause ulcers in and of themselves. However, if you have an

existing ulcer or acid reflux (GERD), spicy foods can exacerbate it. Best to avoid until resolution of your symptoms.

To your health!

Leyla Muedin, MS, RD, CDN