Spicing up your life proves to have many health benefits

The beneficial effects of spices and their bioactive ingredients, such as capsaicin, are already known. Eating red pepper decreases appetite and so may help to reduce obesity. Spices have beneficial roles in cardiovascular, dermatological and gastrointestinal conditions, various cancers and neurogenic bladder. They also have antibacterial activity and affect gut microbiota, which have been related to risks of diabetes and liver cirrhosis.

This large study examined associations between regular consumption of spicy foods and mortality. Results showed that those who ate spicy food more than once a week were less likely to die from cancer, ischaemic heart disease and respiratory diseases. The mechanism is speculative but the cardiovascular system is rich in capsaicin-sensitive nerves that have a role in regulating cardiovascular function. Antioxidant and antiplatelet properties of capsaicin and its role in regulating energy metabolism may also be beneficial for the cardiovascular system. Possible reasons for benefits for the respiratory system are anti-obesity, anti-inflammatory and antihypertensive effects.

Fresh chilli pepper is richer in bioactive ingredients than other forms such as chilli sauce and this study showed that it did have a greater effect.


Countering apathy in patients with Parkinson’s disease

Apathy is a frequent neuropsychiatric disturbance that can precede the onset of motor symptoms in Parkinson’s disease and is most likely to be described, by the patient, as fatigue.

It is defined as reduced motivation with a decrease in goal-directed behaviours and lack of emotion that is not related to cognitive impairment or depression. Normal motivation depends on the integrity of subcortical structures that link the prefrontal cortex with the limbic system.

Dysfunction makes it difficult to redirect attention to novel stimuli, enjoy previous interests or make plans for the future. The person with apathy has ‘nothing to say’ and ‘nothing matters to them’. They may also have difficulty recognising facial emotions in others.

In Parkinson’s disease, apathy decreases after introduction of levodopa but its frequency increases again after five to ten years of disease. The authors report a case of a man having subthalamic stimulation which improved the motor symptoms to such an extent that dopaminergic treatment could be stopped. Five months later apathy had become a severe problem. Restarting levodopa rapidly restored his motivation.


Alternatives to zinc for lower limb compression

This small study evaluated two versions of a new two-layer compression system. Venous leg ulcers account for 70% of lower limb ulcers and compression bandaging is the main therapy. However, many patients find bandaging unpleasant with complaints including malodour and itching.

The potential of zinc to improve chronic skin conditions associated with venous disease is well known but zinc paste bandages have fallen out of favour because they are messy and difficult to apply.

CoFlex UBZ two-layer bandaging system is designed for patients with chronic irritation from venous hypertension, eczema, contact dermatitis and other related conditions. Layer one contains zinc to ease pain and irritation. Layer two is designed to reduce oedema by providing compression.

CoFlex TLC with malodour control is a low-profile, two-layer compression bandage system. Layer one contains cyclodextrins, which occur naturally and have been proven safe in wound care. They work optimally in the presence of wound exudate and allow for effective odour capture and neutralisation.

Both products demonstrated positive clinical outcomes with UBZ offering a distinct advantage over other compression options, particularly when eczematous skin was present.

The TLC odour control offers advantages for a distinct group of patients and could be used to control odour for a short period while the underlying cause of the smell is identified and treated.