

**Intake of dietary  
herbs and spices: A preliminary study about the factors affecting it  
and its relationship with Body Mass Index (BMI)**

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Dietary herbs and spices are gaining interest due to their potential as salt, sugar or fat replacers, enhancing food flavour. Portugal gastronomy traditionally makes use of different aromatic herbs and spices, but the intake patterns of these are not characterized. Despite the known challenges in estimating the intake of herbs and spices, a preliminary study was conducted, in Alentejo region of Portugal, where data was collected in the form of adapted Food Frequency Questionnaire (FFQ), with participants reporting their intake frequency in a time frame of one year. The most used seasonings are coriander, parsley, garlic and green and red peppers. Some variations among different localities were also observed. Women have higher intake of spices and herbs than men, with mustard being the only one men consume in higher amounts than women. It is interesting to see that increases in age are positively associated with the consumption of several of the studied seasonings, but a tendency to young people to consume higher amounts of items in dehydrated powdered form, instead of original form. Herbs and spice consumption has been referred to have some beneficial health effects, which were not deeply investigated in the present study. However, it was observed that cinnamon is negatively related with BMI, in women. In conclusion, location, age and gender can influence herbs and spice consumption, which in turn can be related with health aspects. Detailed analysis, controlling for dietary habits (e.g. energy and macronutrient intake), preferences and health concerns can further aid in understanding the relationship between seasonings consumption and BMI.

*Herbs and spices, Intake habits, Consumer characteristics*