

Garlic: One of Nature's Greatest Disease Fighters

By Michael Ravensthorpe, Natural News

The pungent and aromatic herb, garlic, has a well-documented history of human use for over 5,000 years. The ancient Egyptians, for instance, would regularly incorporate garlic into their meals or utilize it as a medicine. Today, garlic remains a staple in the Mediterranean diet and it is frequently used as a seasoning in its native central Asia. The ancient healing systems of India and China also utilize garlic and often recommend it to people suffering from sickness and disease.

The average garlic bulb contains very few vitamins, minerals, protein or fiber compared to other plant foods. It is, however, packed with some truly special bioactive compounds -- and these compounds are almost single-handedly responsible for garlic's significant medicinal properties.

List of health benefits

Rich in allicin -- Most of garlic's greatest health benefits stem from its allicin content. Allicin, which is the origin of garlic's strong odor, is a sulfur compound that was discovered in 1944 by an Italian chemist named C.J. Cavallito. Countless studies have shown that this compound is a potent antibacterial, antimicrobial, antiviral, antifungal and antioxidant, which is why it's so good at preventing and treating disease. A study published in *Nutrition and Cancer* in 2010, for example, found that allicin, derived from fresh garlic cloves, could kill colon cancer cells. Moreover, a review published in *Leukemia Research* found that garlic-derived allicin can treat breast, bladder, colorectal, hepatic, prostate cancer, lymphoma and skin tumor cell lines.

Additional disease prevention -- Allicin is also known to prevent countless other diseases. A classic example is the common cold, which remains the world's most widespread viral infection. Researchers at the Garlic Centre in the United Kingdom found that volunteers who took an allicin supplement daily for 90 days were almost three times less likely to catch a cold in the wintertime when compared to those participants who took a placebo.

Moreover, a review published in *Natural Product Communications* in 2004 noted that allicin has been "employed to treat infections, wounds, diarrhea, rheumatism, heart disease, diabetes, and many other disorders" and that it has been "evaluated for a number of conditions, including hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, intermittent claudication, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, common cold, as an insect repellent, and for the prevention of arteriosclerosis and cancer." The paper admitted, however, that the clinical evidence is "far from compelling."

Cardiovascular benefits -- The sulfur compounds in garlic have been proven to be effective at boosting heart health. For example, a review published in *Current Pharmaceutical Design* in 2010, which evaluated the findings of 53 clinical trials that investigated the effects of herbal

remedies on hyperlipidemia, noted that garlic was one of the 22 remedies that worked against the condition. Hyperlipidemia, which usually indicates high cholesterol and triglyceride levels in the blood, is a major contributor to heart disease and strokes. Therefore, eating more garlic is a great way to protect one's heart from these serious vascular conditions.

The best way to consume garlic

Since excessive heat can damage the sulfur compounds responsible for garlic's main benefits, it's important that the herb isn't overcooked. The *World's Healthiest Foods* website recommends that garlic be eaten raw when possible, but, if that's not possible or desirable, avoid heating it for longer than five to 15 minutes. Moreover, chopping or crushing the garlic cloves stimulates their allicin production. Some people love to mix crushed garlic with apple cider vinegar, since the vinegar reduces its sharpness without compromising its beneficial qualities.

Sources for this article include:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20924970>

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15158086>

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