

[IMAGE]

Why Garlic Is Good for You

By Editorial Staff

Garlic is one of the world's most well-known and widely used herbs. It has been used as a culinary spice for at least 5,000 years, and has been mentioned in both the Bible and the Talmud (a central text of Judaism). Hippocrates, considered the father of modern medicine, was one of the first people to realize the medicinal properties of garlic and recommended it for many conditions, including parasites and poor digestion.

The active ingredient in garlic is allicin, a sulfur-based compound that when crushed or chewed produces other compounds. Scientific studies suggest garlic supports the cardiovascular system by lowering cholesterol and triglyceride levels in the blood and reducing the stickiness of platelets. Test-tube studies show that garlic has antibacterial, antiviral and antifungal properties; human studies show that garlic reduces the risk of several cancers, particularly those of the esophagus, stomach and colon.

While garlic has not been used as long in traditional Chinese medicine (it is believed to have first been used in China in the early part of the sixth century), it is used to treat a wide range of diseases, including high blood pressure, athlete's foot, infections and ulcers.

Garlic is available in many forms. In addition to fresh garlic, which can be obtained from a typical supermarket, there are garlic extracts, tablets, capsules, tinctures, powders and sprays. Some companies sell odorless garlic tablets.

Some people are sensitive to garlic and may experience heartburn and flatulence after eating large amounts. Because garlic acts as an anticoagulant, people taking blood-thinning medications or people scheduled for surgery should inform their health care provider before taking garlic supplements. Garlic appears to be safe during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Talk to your health care provider to learn more.

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