

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Is Garlic's Cure Worth the Smell?

Most of us have heard one story or another about the health benefits of eating garlic. Is there really anything to them, or is garlic just another urban legend? What is it supposed to do anyway? And how much do I need for protection?

There is enough evidence that garlic does *something* good to spur an awful lot of research. Garlic supposedly helps prevent plaque in our arteries, lowers our cholesterol and blood pressure, kills bacteria and molds, boosts our immune system, and prevents some types of cancer. That's a lot of work from one smelly little bulb!

While there are over 2000 research articles about garlic, the unfortunate thing is that they don't all agree. And in most of them, they either used test tubes, rabbits, rats or just a few people. None of them come close to something like the studies on the DASH diet, for lowering blood pressure, that used tens of thousands of people.

There are a few decent studies on each of the diseases. For example, there are various studies that compared people who ate garlic every day to people who did not. After anywhere from three weeks to several months, the people who ate garlic had significantly lower cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

Studies with rabbits found that eating garlic led to less plaque and thickening of the walls of their arteries. Granted, rabbits aren't people, but they do get stiff arteries and atherosclerosis very much like people do.

When some kinds of bacteria and viruses were exposed to garlic extract, after an hour most of them were dead. The bacteria included Salmonella, Staphylococcus and

one that causes stomach ulcers.

Women who ate garlic everyday for years generally had lower rates of colon cancer than those who didn't eat garlic when 42,000 lowans were interviewed. That's a big study. But it's only as good as the memory of the women who were questioned, and how well they could remember what they used to eat years ago. Do you?

But if there are so many hints that garlic might be so great, why aren't people being told to eat more of it? One reason is that there are just as many studies that didn't find any benefit. Another is that many of the studies used powdered garlic, garlic extract, capsules or pills. There's a lot of variation in how much real garlic and how much active ingredients you get in these forms.

Another reason is that garlic and some garlic supplements do behave like blood thinners. So people taking blood thinner medications, or medications or herbs that also have a blood thinning effect should not take garlic too. Even things such as aspirin, vitamin D, cloves and ginger can make the blood-thinning effects of garlic stronger.

Finally, if you don't like the smell of garlic on your breath or in your body odor, you might try the pills and extracts. However there is no guarantee that you will get much, or any, active ingredient in these products. Some deliver what the label promises, others do not, some don't say how much they deliver.

The best way to be sure you are getting active garlic is to add fresh garlic to your daily diet. One crushed clove a day has enough activity to help manage your cholesterol levels and probably lower your blood pressure. Crush it to release the juices, and then let it stand for 10 minutes so that its enzymes can make it active. Add to salads, spaghetti sauce, soups, or use it in any of these rubs for grilling meats.

Mix the rub the day you intend to grill. Use your fingers to rub the spice mixture

onto the meat. Refrigerate for several hours, the broil or grill as usual. Don't try to store leftover rub, just enjoy the extra flavor your meat has.

Garlic, Sage and Orange Rub for Pork

3 medium cloves of garlic	1 Tbsp grated orange zest
1 Tbsp minced fresh sage leaves	1 Tbsp orange marmalade (or honey)
1 Tbsp olive oil	½ tsp ground black pepper
1/4 tsp salt	

Mince garlic or put through a press. Combine all ingredients in small bowl. Rub onto pork, refrigerate, then grill. Makes enough for about 2 tenderloins.

Garlic-y Italian Rub for Chicken

4 medium cloves garlic, peeled	1/4 cup packed fresh parsley leaves
1/4 cup olive oil	2 Tbsp grated lemon zest
1 Tbsp each of fresh thyme, rosemary and sage leaves	½ tsp salt

Puree all ingredients in blender or food processor until smooth. Pat chicken parts dry, rub on mixture, refrigerate, then grill. Makes enough for 1 chicken.

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