

Garlic

The History of Garlic

Garlic is a member of the onion family and is used all over the world to add flavour to food. It has been used in food and medicine for many thousands of years. We can even trace its use back to Old Testament times as it formed part of the diet of the Israelites in exile in Egypt:-

Numbers 11 verse 5 “We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic.”

The Ancient Egyptians used garlic. It is said that the builders of the pyramids were actually paid in garlic and that garlic was found in the tomb of King Tutankhamen.

Garlic was chewed in ancient times by Greek Olympian athletes, it was said to aid stamina and Roman soldiers ate garlic before battle to give them strength.

Vampires and Garlic

Garlic was made famous in Bram Stoker's “Dracula” for its power to ward off vampires. In the book the character Van Helsing put it around Lucy's neck and dotted it around her room. He also rubbed it on the window sashes and sills and the door frame. All this to protect her from the advances of Count Dracula.

Garlic and Heart Disease

There are many claims that garlic helps to prevent heart disease. Many studies have shown that:-

- Garlic lowers LDL cholesterol (the bad cholesterol). In 1993 The Journal of the Royal College of Physicians reviewed cholesterol level data and found that in just 4 weeks there was a 12% drop in cholesterol levels in people taking garlic supplements.
- Garlic reduces the build-up of “plaque” in the arteries. A build-up of plaque narrows the arteries, reduces blood flow to the heart and can cause blood clots/thrombosis.
- Garlic lowers blood pressure. High blood pressure can lead to a heart attack or heart failure.

Coughs and the Common Cold

The Cherokee Indians used garlic as an expectorant to treat coughs and croup. Hippocrates (460-370BC) used garlic in treating pneumonia and other infections.

A study by The Garlic Centre in Sussex, England found that people taking a daily Garlic supplement are less likely to suffer from the Common Cold compared to people not taking Garlic. To protect against colds, garlic must be consumed fresh or as a supplement because cooking kills the active ingredient Allicin.

Garlic is also said to strengthen the immune system which, in turn, helps the body fight off illnesses such as coughs and colds.

There is, however, no definitive proof that Garlic prevents colds but it definitely clears the nasal passages!

Antibacterial and Antifungal

In 1665 the Royal College of Physicians recommended the use of garlic in fighting the Plague. In the 17th century Dr T Sydenham used it to treat confluent smallpox and as a cure for some dropsies. Louis Pasteur, famous for the discovery of Germ Theory, observed garlic's antibacterial qualities in 1858 and in both World War 1 and 2 it was used on wounds to prevent gangrene and taken as a treatment for dysentery.

In the old days it was also used in the treatment of leprosy and used in poultices for skin sores. Naturopaths use garlic to treat intestinal worms and parasites and it has been found to be beneficial in the treatment of chest infections, digestive disorders and fungal infections like Thrush and Athlete's Foot. It fights off fungi, yeast and viral infections.

British scientists have found that allicin in garlic is effective in treating even the most anti-biotic resistant strains of the super bug MRSA which kills thousands of patients in British hospitals every year.

Garlic and Cancer

Garlic is said to be an anti-carcinogen. There is a report of a man whose pituitary tumour shrank by an amazing 50% in the 5 months that he was consuming 5-7g of fresh garlic per day!

In the 1950 scientists experimented with Allicin (the active part of garlic) and mice suffering from cancer. They found that mice that were injected with allicin lived for over 6 months whereas the untreated mice died within 2 months.

Many other studies have shown that garlic can prevent cancer, especially cancers of the digestive system.

Pregnancy

There are differing opinions on the use of garlic during pregnancy. There is some evidence that garlic can help to prevent pre-eclampsia in pregnancy because it lowers blood pressure. A study in a London hospital found that garlic may also help babies in the womb. It helps those that are at risk from being born with a low birth weight gain weight.

Diabetes

Garlic may help regulate blood sugar levels and so may be useful in the treatment of diabetes. According to scientists from Manchester Metropolitan University, garlic may prevent the damage that high blood sugar levels do to the eyes, skin, blood vessels and kidneys of patients with diabetes.

Mosquito repellent

Garlic not only repels vampires, it also repels those pesky mosquitoes! No one is sure why it repels mosquitoes. Perhaps it is harmful to them and so they have evolved to avoid garlic or it may be that they do not like the taste or smell. Who knows? The odour of garlic does seep through the skin's

pores and it enters the bloodstream.

You don't have to eat loads of garlic or smear it on the skin to benefit from its repellent qualities, you can buy creams and sprays!

How much Garlic?

To benefit from all of the health benefits of garlic it is recommended that we should consume 2-3 cloves of garlic or take 2-3 300mg tablets of a garlic supplement a day.

Garlic is best consumed raw as cooking it can damage the active ingredients. If you want to add it to cooking then try adding it near the end. You cannot avoid garlic breath if you're eating raw garlic but chewing parsley can help. If you really don't like the taste of garlic or it's having a negative effect on your love-life then take supplements.

Garlic and Sex

Although you might think that garlic would put a damper on a romantic evening, it is actually widely believed to be an aphrodisiac and it helps prolong a man's erection. Garlic improves blood circulation (vital to an erection) and it stimulates the production of an enzyme which is responsible for the mechanics behind a successful erection.

Simple to cook with

So, not only is garlic a wonderfully tasty food, it's also good for you. Go and make yourself some garlic bread – simply crush a clove of garlic into a couple of tablespoons of margarine or butter, get a baguette and slice at 1 inch intervals (don't slice all the way through) and then spread each slice with the garlic butter. Wrap in foil and bake in the oven at a medium temperature for about 15 minutes.