

Originally published November 16 2007

## New Studies Reveal How Crushed Garlic Is Good For The Heart

by Katherine East

(NewsTarget) Ever wondered what gives you the bad breath after eating garlic? Well it's a substance called Allicin and when digested, it causes blood cells to release sulphur compounds and these produce tainted breath and for some people even a foul body odor. The good news is that the pungent smelling bulb is now revealing answers to researchers and they are beginning to understand why garlic has so many health benefits and why some consider it to be a super food.

Garlic has long been renowned for its healing properties and was even worshiped in ancient times. Numerous studies have been done on its reported cures and remedies for various ailments. Claims that it can cure all from yeast infections to athlete's foot, lower cholesterol and ward off a cold have been around for centuries. Studies have shown varying results.

Now, recently published research suggests that [garlic](#) can actually relax arteries and thereby increase blood flow, reduce blood clots and prevent oxidative damage. This is good news for [heart health](#).

Clinical tests at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, showed that blood vessels exposed to crushed garlic juice showed tension within the vessels reducing by 72%. The reaction takes place in the cells of the blood vessel lining and causes them to dilate.

A laboratory study published this month in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences showed that red blood cells exposed to garlic juice begin emitting [hydrogen sulphides](#), a biological messenger that stimulates vessels to open.

This reaction reduces blood pressure and in doing so increases the oxygen going to various parts of the body especially important for vital organs while reducing the pressure on the heart. These results added to findings earlier this year by researchers from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, that hydrogen sulphide actually prevented heart muscle damage in the event of a heart attack.

At high concentrations, hydrogen sulphide is actually poisonous but our body produces its own supply. However as age advances, Hydrogen Sulphide production dwindles.

Dr David Kraus, Ph.D., a UAB associate professor in the Departments of Environmental Health Sciences and Biology and the study's lead author said, "Our results suggest garlic in the diet is a very good thing. Certainly, in areas where garlic consumption is high, such as the Mediterranean and the Far East, there is a low incidence of cardiovascular disease. It is, however, important to know that large amounts in supplement form may interact with blood thinning drugs and could increase the risk of bleeding."

The fresh garlic used in the study was the equivalent of eating two cloves of garlic, possibly more than most people unless you live in the Mediterranean and the Far East where it is used extensively in cooking.

Dr. Kraus suggested that before cooking with fresh garlic, let it stand for 15 minutes after crushing as this triggers the enzyme to boost the healthy components of the garlic and so increase the health benefits.

Future studies will help to determine how much of the sulphide compounds are needed for effectiveness in garlic supplements or eating raw garlic for health benefits.

## About the author

Katherine Oosthuis manages and writes for a health and nutrition website [Detox For Life](#) . Her passion is to make research available to those who are looking to improve their well-being and revolutionise their health through better nutrition and alternative medicines.