

Eat spicy, live longer? Study says yes

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Chili peppers — and other foods that taste hot and spicy — might help you live longer, according to a new study. Active ingredients in the peppers, like capsaicin, help protect against some diseases. Credit: Thinkstock

Like a fiery finish to dinner? Then you'll be glad to know that a recent study suggests people who eat hot, spicy foods regularly may live longer.

Tulane University epidemiologist Dr. Lu Qi co-led the study of more than 500,000 Chinese adults over seven years. The results indicated that participants who ate foods flavored with chili peppers every day reduced their risk of premature dying by 14 percent, as compared to people who ate chili peppers less than once a week.

But apparently you don't have to indulge every day.

"Even among those who consumed [spicy foods](#) less frequently [one to two days a week], the [beneficial effects](#) could be observed. Indeed, moderate increase of spicy foods would benefit," someone's health, says Qi, who is the HCA Regents Distinguished Chair and Professor of Epidemiology.

In China, [chili pepper](#) is a popular spice, and participants reported eating their peppers fresh, dried and in sauce or oil. In the United States, hot pepper sauce has increased in popularity over the last decade, according to market research. Other spicy foods like horseradish, [black pepper](#), garlic and ginger also may offer similar benefits.

"There also is preliminary data from other studies showing such potential," Qi says, noting that his study did not address those foods and that more research is needed on them.

The study was published in The *BMJ* (formerly the *British Medical Journal*).

Chili peppers contain capsaicin and other ingredients that may protect your health. Studies show capsaicin decreases appetite, may reduce risk of obesity and may offer antibacterial properties. It also may help protect against diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer and other conditions. Chili peppers improve inflammation and reduce blood pressure and oxidative stress, Qi adds.

Even though capsaicin's benefits look promising, he recommends more research. Meantime, if you want extra zing in your life, let chili peppers do the work.

More information: "Consumption of spicy foods and total and cause specific mortality: population based cohort study." *BMJ* 2015; 351 doi: [dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj.h3942](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.h3942)

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