

Tap into the health powers of garlic

July 27 2018, by Len Canter, Healthday Reporter



(HealthDay)—As scientists look into the effects of diet on health, they're finding that more and more everyday foods offer benefits that go well beyond making dishes tastier.

Garlic, an ingredient found in almost every cuisine, has emerged as one such superfood.

Part of the allium family, which includes onions and leeks, [garlic](#) has a number of compounds that supply its health-boosting effects as well as its pungent aroma. According to wide-ranging research, garlic can seemingly improve immunity and heart health, possibly help prevent as well as fight certain cancers, and lower triglycerides and total cholesterol. Its many compounds include antioxidants and [allicin](#), which has anti-bacterial properties, researchers report.

Some of these benefits can be seen after eating just one meal with raw garlic. Yet overall there's enough evidence to have at least half of a clove every day.

To get the most benefits, first chop, slice or crush fresh garlic—this fires up a process that makes its compounds more potent. Wait 5 to 10 minutes before eating or using in a dish, especially if you'll be mixing it with a highly acidic food like lemon juice.

Here are some easy ways to use raw garlic:

- Mash into avocado for guacamole.
- Blend into Caesar salad dressing.
- Puree with chickpeas for hummus or with white beans for bean dip.

But you don't have to always eat it raw. As long as the garlic is prepped as suggested and added toward the end of a recipe, you can cook it and it will retain its nutritional value.

More information: The Linus Pauling Institute at Oregon State University has detailed information on [garlic](#), including its healthful properties.

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Citation: Tap into the health powers of garlic (2018, July 27) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-07-health-powers-garlic.html>

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