

Consumption of chili pepper cuts down the risk of death from a heart or cerebral attack

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Chili pepper is a common ingredient in Italians kitchens, and over the centuries, it has been praised for its supposed therapeutic virtues. Now, an Italian study shows that people who consume it on a regular basis

have an all-cause mortality risk 23 percent lower than those who do not consume it. The study, published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology (JACC)*, was conducted by the Department of Epidemiology and Prevention of I.R.C.C.S. Neuromed in Pozzilli, Italy, in collaboration with the Department of Oncology and Molecular Medicine of the Istituto Superiore di Sanità in Rome, the University of Insubria in Varese and the Mediterranean Cardiocentro in Naples.

The study examined 22,811 citizens of the Molise region in Italy participating in the Moli-sani study. Following their [health status](#) for an average period of about eight years and comparing it with their [eating habits](#), Neuromed researchers observed that in people regularly consuming [chili pepper](#) (four times a week or more), the risk of dying of a heart attack was cut by 40 percent. Risk reduction for cerebrovascular mortality was more than halved.

Marialaura Bonaccio, Neuromed epidemiologist and first author of the publication, says, "An interesting fact is that protection from mortality risk was independent of the type of diet people followed. In other words, someone can follow the healthy Mediterranean diet, someone else can eat less healthily, but for all of them, chili pepper has a protective effect."

The Moli-sani study is the first to explore the properties chili pepper in relation to the risk of death in a European and Mediterranean population. Licia Iacoviello, director of the Department of Epidemiology and Prevention at the I.R.C.C.S. Neuromed, says, "Chili pepper is a fundamental component of our food culture. We see it hanging on Italian balconies, and even depicted in jewels. Over the centuries, beneficial properties of all kinds have been associated with its consumption, mostly on the basis of anecdotes or traditions, if not magic. It is important now that research deals with it in a serious way, providing rigor and scientific evidence. And now, as already observed in China and in the United

States, we know that the various plants of the capsicum species, although consumed in different ways throughout the world, can exert a protective action toward health."

New studies are required to understand the biochemical mechanisms through which the [chili](#) pepper and its capsaicin-containing relatives act. But for the time being, spicy food lovers surely have one more reason to maintain their habit.

More information: Marialaura Bonaccio et al, Chili Pepper Consumption and Mortality in Italian Adults, *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jacc.2019.09.068](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jacc.2019.09.068)

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