

# Researchers look to licorice for promising cancer treatments

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Licorice is more than a candy people either love or hate—it may play a role in preventing or treating certain types of cancer, according to researchers at the University of Illinois Chicago.

Gnanasekar Munirathinam and his research team are studying substances derived from the licorice plant *Glycyrrhiza glabra* to determine if they could be used to prevent or stop the growth of prostate [cancer](#).

Munirathinam is an associate professor in the department of biomedical sciences at the College of Medicine Rockford.

A research review into molecular insights of a licorice-derived substance called glycyrrhizin for preventing or treating cancer conducted by Dr. Munirathinam and student researchers suggests further research could lead to specific agents for [clinical use](#).

The journal *Pharmacological Research* recently published the study titled "Oncopreventive and oncotherapeutic potential of licorice triterpenoid compound glycyrrhizin and its derivatives: Molecular insights."

"When we look at the research out there and our own data, it appears that glycyrrhizin and its derivative glycyrrhetic acid have great potential as anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer agents," Munirathinam said. "More research is needed into exactly how these could best be used to develop therapies, but this appears to be a promising area of cancer research."

Should everyone go out and eat a bunch of licorice? Probably not, because it may affect [blood pressure](#), interact with certain medications, and cause serious adverse effects, including death, when used excessively. An occasional sweet treat of [licorice](#) candy or tea may be better options until more studies can show how to best harness the plant's benefits.

"Very few [clinical trials](#) in humans have been conducted," Munirathinam said. "We hope our research on prostate cancer cells advances the science to the point where therapies can be translated to help prevent or even cure prostate and other types of cancer."

**More information:** Rifika Jain et al, Oncopreventive and oncotherapeutic potential of licorice triterpenoid compound glycyrrhizin and its derivatives: Molecular insights, *Pharmacological Research* (2022). DOI: [10.1016/j.phrs.2022.106138](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.phrs.2022.106138)

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