

Raw Garlic: Health Food Or Toxin?

Raw Garlic, or even cooked garlic, has long been placed among the miracle-working foods everyone should include in their diet. As a plant food, it's been embraced by vegetarians, vegans, and raw foodists, but it remains popular among the general population as well.

What's so special about about garlic, and is it actually beneficial?

It's a hard, bulbous plant that's a member of the lily family, which includes chives, shallots, onions, and leeks, each of which shares similar properties.

Raw garlic, being **uncooked and therefore theoretically undamaged**, is often lauded for possessing disease-fighting properties, although these are not well established.

For instance, a number of small animal-based studies initially seemed to indicate that garlic could fight the build up of the arterial plaque that's the source of atherosclerosis (1), but larger-scale human studies have shown no improvement (2).

One area where garlic is proving quite effective is in its ability to kill bacteria. Long concerned about the growing resistance of bacteria to antibiotics, researchers have sought out other options, and garlic shows significant ability to kill living cells of many types (3).

Raw Garlic: That Wonderful Stench

The source of garlic's antibacterial properties is allicin, which is also responsible for its pungent taste and odor. When someone complains about your garlic breath, or the the nasty aroma exuded from your pores following a garlic-rich meal, you can blame the allicin.

Allicin is produced by garlic to defend against pests and predators interested in a quick meal (4), IE, hungry humans. Much like thorn-protected flowers, the idea is to cause as much damage as possible to any possible predator in the hopes that the animal will think twice before chowing down.

The substance is very effective in what it does. I've used garlic extract to kill ticks that are attached to a dog. After about 30 minutes of being washed with 10 drops of pure garlic extract, the tick is dead. Organic gardeners have long known that many pests will think twice before crossing a garlic plant, and I've effectively used rows of them to protect my tomato plants, which are often the target of hungry bugs.

Humans are significantly larger than insects and it would take very large quantities of allicin to kill us, if it's possible at all.

None the less, there's significant reason to believe that raw garlic can harm us.

Raw Garlic: Drug-Like Side Effects

You've probably seen the ridiculous drug commercials on television that promise to get rid of the side effects of your disease, but then note the laundry list of more side effects which people taking the medication may suffer from. Often the medication sounds worse than the initial disease.

Raw garlic intake is notable because it has a similarly-long list of side effects, and almost seems like it's a drug.

"Garlick maketh a man wynke, drynke, and stynke."

- Thomas Nash, 16th Century poet

Although it's harder to say what's happening out of sight in the body's interior, it's very obvious that garlic irritates the skin. As a rubefacient, garlic oil quickly causes the skin to redden when applied directly. Redness indicates that inflammation is occurring, the body's attempt to isolate a harmful substance so that it does not enter the blood stream and cause more problems.

In some cases, when people try to regularly apply garlic to the skin as a acne treatment or for other purposes, serious burns have occurred (5).

Raw Garlic: The Interior

If garlic can damage our comparatively strong skin, what will it do to our delicate insides?

Several studies have pointed out intestinal cell damage possibly resulting from garlic ingestion (6). It's also been known to cause indigestion, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea (7).

Raw Garlic and The Blood

Garlic is a blood thinner (8), much like two popular poisons (all drugs are technically poisons), alcohol and aspirin.

Blood thinners are promoted by medical professionals as way of cutting your chance of a heart attacks and strokes if you have heart disease. Unfortunately, subsequently stopping this medication often causes strokes (9), especially in the case of aspirin.

A far safer way to prevent heart attack and strokes is to get rid of the underlying cause- the powerful blood-clotting substances that people eat every day -meat, dairy, eggs, and processed oils and fats (10, 11).

When you avoid meat and other fatty foods your blood is "thinned" naturally, which prevents hearts attacks and strokes with no side effects or rebound effects. The big difference is that blood thinning medication is a slap-dash fix that leaves you at risk when you stop, but a low-fat diet heals the underlying disease, atherosclerosis, by removing the cause.

Garlic's blood-thinning properties causes other problems.

Because garlic impairs the body's ability to clot blood and stop bleeding, it's recommended that patients take no garlic for seven days prior to surgery to reduce the risk of heavy bleeding, and that women should not take it prior to giving birth (12).

Think about that for a second - garlic actually impairs the body's ability to heal.

Raw Garlic and Pregnant Women

You know a food is bad when it's believed to play a roll in accidental abortions, but garlic has been placed in that category (13), and it's recommended that pregnant women stop taking it.

Allicin, which, you'll recall, is strong enough to drive off or kill small bugs, enters the breast milk of pregnant women, altering the smell of the milk and the suckling behavior of the infant (13).

It's a bit like topping off a baby's bottle with an insecticide. You wouldn't want to drink it either.

Raw Garlic: Irritation You Can't Afford.

Sure, raw garlic works like an antibiotic, killing bacteria. But is that a good thing?

Think about what we've learned above. Raw garlic causes irritation to the skin, stops the coagulation of blood, induces nausea and other side effects, and can even cause abortion in some cases.

Maybe a food that destroys life on the small scale is too strong for us, even on a limited scale.

Antibacterial agents kill bacteria, but why would we wish to do that? Bacteria is an essential component of life, and bereft of them life could not continue on this planet.

Bacteria plays a very important function in the body: decomposing dead cells

foolish.

Raw Garlic: Following Up

Learn about a [healthy raw food diet](#) that will set you on a path toward health without harmful substances and drugs.

Find out how [raw garlic fits into our food options](#).

Raw Garlic: Sources:

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