

# Super Garlic Benefits: Kiss Colds and the Flu (and Vampires!) Goodbye



*Allium sativum*, better known as garlic, is a famous member of the onion family. It's a staple in Mediterranean cooking and has been used in traditional medicine since the ancient Egyptians. It's well known for being beneficial to heart health and reducing the risk of cancer. But what about the common cold? With cold and flu season on the horizon, let's dive into the benefits of garlic for colds and flu.

## The Health Benefits of Garlic

At just 42 calories per serving, garlic is nutrient dense, containing B vitamins, vitamin C, selenium, and manganese. What's more, garlic has a number of health benefits that include:

- Reduced blood pressure
- Preventing atherosclerosis, or plaque on the arteries that can cause cardiovascular disease
- Reduces the risk of certain types of cancer
- Antioxidant-rich
- Improves longevity

A study published in the journal *Molecular and Cellular Biochemistry* found that garlic supplementation caused a moderate decline in blood pressure. Another study, published in the

same journal, found that after just two months of supplementation, there was a reduction in both systolic (SBP) and diastolic blood pressures (DBP). Systolic measures the pressure on your artery walls when your heart beats and the diastolic blood pressure measures the pressure on your artery walls when your heart rests.

Additionally, according to the National Cancer Institute, several population studies have shown that garlic can reduce the risk of certain types of cancer, specifically cancer of the stomach, colon, esophagus, pancreas, and breast. The higher the amount of raw or cooked garlic that a person consumed, the lower the risk, especially for stomach and colorectal cancer.

## Garlic for Colds and Flu

Garlic may also be helpful at staving off the common cold. A study published in *Advances in Therapy* followed 46 volunteers, half taking a placebo and the other half taking a garlic supplement for a 12-week period in the midst of cold and flu season (between November and February). Using a five point scale, participants described their overall health (whether they had gotten colds and how quickly they recovered from them during that period). Those taking the supplement were much less likely to get a cold and recovered faster than those taking a placebo. Allicin, a compound found in garlic is likely the reason that garlic is such a powerhouse at fighting off colds.

## How to Use Garlic

When it comes to using garlic for long term health benefits such as cancer and heart disease prevention, make sure that once you peel and chop garlic, you wait 15 minutes before sautéing. This causes an enzyme reaction that maximizes the health benefits of garlic.

In countries where garlic has proven beneficial, including Italy, Korea, and China, people eat as many as twelve cloves per day. While this might seem intense, increasing your intake by just five cloves per day can help. And it's easier than you think. Start every sauté by adding onions and garlic, add it to salad dressing, or enjoy pickled garlic.

During cold and flu season, fight illness by chopping up a few cloves of garlic, boiling for a few minutes to extract the nutrients, and using that water to steep your tea. Do this each morning during cold and flu season or at the onset of a cold. You can also take a garlic supplement that contains allicin. However, it's much less expensive to use fresh garlic, plus you know exactly what you're getting.

## Garlic Warnings

Garlic has been shown to have a number of health benefits, but for some people, it can cause indigestion and of course, it can make you smell like garlic. Chew on fennel seeds to reduce the smell.

In yoga, garlic is not considered good for the brain because it can be disruptive to meditation. In Ayurveda, garlic is classified as both rajasic or tamasic. Rajasic foods, which also include red meat, tea, coffee, alcohol, and chocolate, can overstimulate the body and make the mind restless. Tamasic foods, which also include meats and overly processed foods, are dulling to the senses and also may hinder meditation. That's why traditional Indian

cooking often includes Hing, a spice that comes from giant fennel plants and adds a similar oniony flavor to foods.