



Science News

More Evidence In Favor of Garlic's Cardiovascular Benefits

In the May 26 issue of *Atherosclerosis*, researchers reported on the results of a four-year clinical study which found that garlic helps prevent and, in some cases, even reverse plaque build-up in the arteries. Arterial plaque is known to be a risk factor for heart disease and stroke. The study, which took place in Berlin, Germany, is the longest ever to be conducted on heart attack risk reduction using a dietary supplement. Based on the 'heartening' results of this study and more than 20 others, researchers believe that powdered garlic may have both a preventative and a curative role to play in cardiovascular disease.

During the 48-month treatment period, 152 men and women were randomly assigned to take either 900 mg of garlic powder or placebo each day. From the beginning, all participants had advanced plaque accumulation, in addition to at least one other established risk factor for heart disease, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes mellitus, or a history of smoking. Researchers used high-resolution ultrasound to measure the progression and regression of plaque volume in both the common carotid and femoral arteries.

At the end of the study, those who took garlic demonstrated a 2.6 percent reduction in plaque volume, compared to a 15.6 percent increase in the placebo group. When the effects were analyzed by gender, the results for women initially took researchers by surprise. While women in the garlic group experienced a modest 4.6 percent decrease in plaque volume, those taking placebo demonstrated a massive 53.1 percent increase. Researchers attributed the striking difference to a higher rate of dropouts from the female garlic group, due to "annoyance by odor." This led to a predominance of younger women in the placebo group, and more older women in the garlic group. Despite this unseen event, researchers maintained that the 4.6 percent decline in plaque volume seen in the female garlic group remains a "genuine garlic effect."

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