

Heart Health

[Blood clots](#), [capsaicin](#), [cayenne](#), [heart](#)

Most people think that hot spicy food is bad for your health. Yet in some cases, the exact opposite is true. Cayenne peppers can make your eyes water and your tongue burn, but they also have healing power.

Several widely separated cultures have used cayenne for medicinal purposes for centuries. Now modern scientific research validates much of the folklore. Cayenne peppers can ward off the common cold and flu. They help take away arthritic pain and help asthma sufferers. Cayenne pepper is useful to help stop itching and both internal and external bleeding. Cayenne peppers can help your body fend off ailments such as heart disease, cancers, cataracts, Alzheimer's disease and others.

Cayenne contains a compound called capsaicin. Capsaicin is the ingredient that gives peppers their heat. Generally, the hotter the pepper, the more capsaicin it contains. In addition to adding heat to the pepper, capsaicin acts to reduce platelet stickiness and relieve pain. Research shows cayenne can help to:

Improve Circulation. Cayenne peppers are a circulatory stimulant that facilitates blood flow. Used as a heart attack preventative, cayenne can do wonders in toning your heart and keeping it in top condition. Also, cayenne is one of the richest and most stable sources of Vitamin E, which is also cardioprotective.¹

Benefit Your Heart. Cayenne and other red chili peppers reduce triglyceride levels, and platelet aggregation, while increasing the body's ability to dissolve fibrin, a substance integral to the formation of blood clots. Cultures that use hot peppers like cayenne liberally have a much lower rate of heart attack, stroke and pulmonary embolism.²

Fight Inflammation. Capsaicin is a potent inhibitor of substance P, a neuropeptide associated with inflammatory processes. When animals injected with a substance that causes arthritis ate capsaicin, they had significantly reduced inflammation. Other research shows that peppers can help control pain associated with arthritis, psoriasis, and diabetic neuropathy.³

Clear Congestion. The peppery heat in capsaicin also stimulates secretions that help clear mucus from your stuffed up nose or congested lungs. Capsaicin is similar to a compound found in many cold remedies for breaking up congestion, except that capsaicin works much faster. A tea made with hot cayenne pepper very quickly stimulates the mucus membranes lining the nasal passages to drain, helping to relieve congestion and stuffiness.⁴

Boost Immunity. Cayenne also helps maintain healthy epithelial tissues including the mucous membranes that line the nasal passages, lungs, intestinal tract and urinary tract and serve as the body's first line of defense against invading pathogens.⁵

Prevent Stomach Ulcers. Cayenne peppers have a bad – and undeserved – reputation for contributing to stomach ulcers. Not only do they *not* cause ulcers, these hot peppers may help prevent them by killing harmful bacteria and stimulating the stomach to secrete protective buffering juices that prevent ulcer formation. The use of cayenne pepper is actually associated with a reduced risk of stomach ulcers.⁶ It stimulates peristalsis and emptying of the stomach.⁷

Drop A Few Extra. That heat you feel after eating hot peppers takes energy and calories to produce. Cayenne peppers contain substances called capsinoids that significantly increase thermogenesis (heat production) and oxygen consumption in your fat tissue after you eat them.⁸

If you like to eat peppers, don't listen to the "naysayers." Hot Mexican, Szechwan, Indian, or those smoldering Thai dishes can make excellent choices.

You'll be amazed at how easy it is to incorporate cayenne into your cuisine. Use cayenne by taste and add it to food in place of black pepper.

Keep a bottle of cayenne in the house for emergencies, e.g sprinkling some cayenne on any type of cut, then applying pressure to the area, or just above the site of the wound, will usually stop the bleeding immediately. You can also get cayenne in supplement form.

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