

How to bring out the hidden health benefits of garlic

Why chopping garlic is important:

The latest scientific research tells us that slicing, chopping, mincing, or pressing garlic before cooking will enhance its health-promoting benefits. A sulfur-based compound called alliin and an enzyme called alliinase are separated in the garlic's cell structure when it is whole. Cutting garlic ruptures the cells and releases these elements, allowing them to come in contact and form a powerful new compound called allicin, which not only adds to the number of garlic's health-promoting benefits but is also the culprit behind its pungent aroma and gives garlic its bite.

By chopping garlic more finely, more allicin may be produced. Pressing garlic or mincing it into a smooth paste will give you the strongest flavor and may also result in an increased amount of allicin. So, the next time you chop, mince, or press your garlic, you will know that the more pungent the smell, the better it probably is for your health.

Why you should let garlic sit for 5-10 minutes:

To get the most health benefits from garlic, let it sit for a minimum of 5 minutes, optimally 10 minutes, after cutting and before eating or cooking. Waiting 5-10 minutes allows the health-promoting allicin to form. If you do not let it sit, allicin is never formed, so it is worth the wait.

How cooking affects the nutrients in garlic:

Heating garlic without letting it sit has been found to deactivate the enzyme that is responsible for the formation of allicin. However, if you have allowed your garlic to sit for 5-10 minutes, you can cook it on low or medium heat for a short period of time (up to 15 minutes) without destroying the allicin. This is because letting it sit not only ensures the maximum synthesis of the allicin, but also makes it more stable and resistant to the heat of cooking.

Research on garlic reinforces the validity of this practice. When crushed garlic was heated, its ability to inhibit cancer development in animals was blocked; yet, when the researchers allowed the crushed garlic to sit for 10 minutes before heating, its anticancer activity was preserved.

Cooking for:

5-15 minutes: minimal loss of nutrients

15-30 minutes: moderate loss of nutrients

45+ minutes: substantial loss of nutrients

Taken from: *The World's Healthiest Foods* by George Mateljan