GARLIC By Dr. John Fudens HMC DVM PH

Garlic, part of the lily family along with onions and chives, is known in ancient times to fend off demons. But in modern times it has a reputation for preventing and treating cancer and other modern day killer diseases.

Eric Block of the State University of New York at Albany, an authority on garlic’s chemistry, states “undisturbed, the garlic bulb has a limited number of medically active compounds. But chopping, steaming and food processing triggers the formation of a multitude of compounds that are quite reactive and participate in a complex sequence of chemical reactions. Ultimately an amazing collection of chemical compounds are produced. Garlic unleashes at least 100 sulfur containing compounds. Garlic’s sulfur compounds are linked to its medicinal uses. What compounds are formed depends on various conditions such as the temperature of garlic at cutting, how it is processed and where it was grown.

Studies in Italy and China showed that the risk of stomach cancer among people declined as their consumption of garlic, onions and scallions increased according to the National Cancer Institute. Garlic may inhibit breast cancer. A Pennsylvania State University study showed a 70% reduction in breast tumors in susceptible laboratory rats. Garlic has also been shown to prevent cancers, lower the risk of heart disease, protect cells from radiation, pollution, aging and stimulates immunity.

Garlic has been used medicinally for at least 4,000 years. Garlic is mentioned 22 times in the Egyptian Codex Ebers, a medical papyrus dating to about 1500 BC. It lists garlic as an effective remedy for a variety of ailments such as heart problems, headaches, bites, worms and tumors. During the ancient Olympic games in Greece, athletes swallowed garlic as stimulants. Mohammed, founder of the Islamic religion, recommended it for stings and bites. In wars, garlic was used as an antiseptic to prevent gangrene.

Robert I-San Lin, a world authority on garlic, cautions people not t use any form of garlic without professional advice. Excessive amounts of raw garlic can cause anemia and inflammation of the digestive tract. Other forms of garlic appear to be less toxic. Although garlic has many marvelous attributes, Lin says, it is a myth that garlic makes skin beautiful and bodies well proportioned. Pills, pickled garlic and aged garlic extracts normally do not produce fresh garlic breath. Although garlic is called the “stinking rose” it gives off little or no odor until cut or crushed. Its odor is not critical to its health benefits.

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