

WELL | EAT

# Eat Peppers, Live Longer?

By NICHOLAS BAKALAR JAN. 17, 2017

Eating hot peppers may help you live longer.

A new analysis, in *PLOS One*, corroborates findings from a 2015 study of spicy food that was conducted in China.

The new report used data on 16,179 American adults participating in a larger public health study.

There were 4,946 deaths over the 23 years of the study. After controlling for age, sex, smoking, blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes and other characteristics, they found that those who reported eating hot peppers had a 13 percent reduced risk for dying early.

The authors had no information about the quantities of peppers people ate. The study is observational, and therefore no causal connection can be proven.

Still, they write, capsaicin, the substance that gives peppers their punch, has antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties that may be linked to disease prevention.

Should you eat more hot peppers? “The evidence isn’t strong enough to make me change my diet,” said a co-author of the study, Benjamin Littenberg, a professor of medicine at the University of Vermont. “Don’t smoke, limit calories, don’t drink to excess, get a flu shot every year — those are things we have very convincing evidence will help you live longer. I don’t know how much chili pepper to tell you to eat.”

A version of this article appears in print on January 24, 2017, on Page D6 of the New York edition with the headline: Eat: Eat Peppers, Live Longer?.