

Tomato pill to beat heart disease

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The tomato is the latest 'superfood' hailed as a boost to health

A WONDER pill that uses the fat-busting power of tomatoes could save hundreds of thousands of lives, heart experts revealed yesterday. British scientists have found a way to put all the antioxidant goodness in the skin of ripe tomatoes in a pill. It is said to be able to slash cholesterol levels in eight weeks.

Heart and stroke specialists said the pill, to be launched today, will be “much more effective” than the statins taken by thousands of Britons. The tablets, a kind of “Mediterranean diet in a pill” could be available over the counter at high street pharmacists this month – at little more than £1 a day. It is safe to rush into the shops because it is a natural product which does not need exhaustive drug testing.

Heart expert Dr Rob Hicks said the pill could “save lives on a global basis”. He added: “The potential is enormous. We might see a fall in the number of people suffering heart attacks and strokes and other health problems relating to arterial damage.”

The wonder pill could save hundreds of lives. Heart disease is the UK's biggest killer, with almost 200,000 people a year dying from it and 275,000 suffering heart attacks. Strokes kill 67,000 of the 150,000 people who have them each year.

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The new pill, called Ateronon, is to be launched today at the conference of the British Cardiovascular Society in London. In tests on 150 people suffering from heart disease the rates of growth of harmful fats in the blood, known as lipids, were reduced to almost zero in just eight weeks. Up until now, statins have been used to treat people with high cholesterol – but they are ineffective in almost two-thirds of people. The trials showed the new pill, developed from a lycopene compound produced by Nestle, appeared effective in all patients.

Neuroscientist Peter Kirkpatrick, who will lead a further research project at Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge, said the new treatment could be “much more effective” than statins.

“The benefits of lycopene in the Mediterranean diet cannot be ignored,” he added.

Gunter Schmidt, cell biologist and chief executive of Ateronon's manufacturer Cambridge Theranostics Ltd, said everyone develops arteriosclerosis, a growth of lipids, at some point after the age of 18. “This has the potential to effect everybody. We are extremely excited about it.”

Ivan Petyaev, a cardiologist and CTL's medical director, said: “What we have done is to develop a method of delivering something which is of known benefit. “Changing diet or lifestyle is difficult, but if you can create beneficial effects by taking a daily pill, that is easy.”

Heart disease and stroke sufferers will be able to buy a month's supply for £35 from pharmacists.

Last night Professor Anthony Leeds, trustee of cholesterol charity Heart UK, said: “This is an entirely new approach to the treatment of high cholesterol and opens up an exciting possibility.”

Dr Peter Coleman, deputy director of research at The Stroke Association, welcomed the findings, saying the build-up of cholesterol plaque in the arteries was a significant cause of stroke.

Alf Lindberg, of the Nobel Foundation's official website, said that lycopene was already proven to reduce the build-up of cholesterol, therefore Ateronon is “automatically reducing the risk of getting a heart attack”.

And Chris Hedges, of the eye charity Open Sight, said: “We have long known of a link between diet and the effects of macular disease which affects the sight of one in three people over 75 in Britain. “This breakthrough strengthens this link, which may help in reducing this condition.”

A cure for severe liver damage caused by drinking could also be a step closer – with the help of a drug used to treat high blood pressure. In tests, Losartan not only shank scarring in half of patients but reversed damage before it developed into cirrhosis. Binge-drinking Britain is in the grip of an epidemic of liver disease, with cases of alcohol-related disease tripling in the past 15 years. Cirrhosis kills 30,000 people a year and is now common in people in their 20s and 30s.

<http://www.express.co.uk/posts/view/104633/Tomato-pill-to-beat-heart-disease>