



**For the week of
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Editor:

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Red wine benefits keep adding up

I love some red wine with dinner. What's new on its health benefits?

Actually, an item in the journal *Atherosclerosis* late last year reported on yet another benefit of resveratrol, a compound in red wine that researchers suspect is responsible for many of this libation's health benefits.

The article — really a letter to the editor from researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago — details evidence that resveratrol could have antimicrobial activity against pathogens in the blood that could lead to heart disease.

First, some background: Resveratrol is produced naturally by plants such as grapes, peanuts and other fruits and nuts. Its purpose is to fight off attacks and protect the plant from fungi. Even after fighting a fungus, the substance remains in the fruit and skin.

Several years ago, scientists realized that resveratrol seems to have both anti-cancer and anti-inflammatory properties. Now, there's growing evidence that it also fights against heart disease, as well.

The Illinois researchers report that resveratrol appears to help inactivate the pathogen *Chlamydia pneumoniae*, which travels through the bloodstream and is suspected of helping cause atherosclerosis. Atherosclerosis is a major cause of heart disease, in which fatty substances, cholesterol, cellular

waste products, calcium and other substances build up in arteries.

Ohio State University researchers also study resveratrol. One line of study showed that resveratrol inhibits a protein that attaches to DNA inside cells. The protein, nuclear-factor-kappa B (or NF-kappa B for short) turns genes on and off. Turning genes on is good sometimes — you need them to do that to “jumpstart” immune functions, for example. But you need them to turn off sometimes, too — especially with cancer. By inhibiting that protein, you could inhibit cancerous cells from growing.

This is no reason to get drunk every night. But it could help explain the “French paradox,” in which the French, despite diets relatively high in fat, have among the lowest incidences of heart disease in the western world.

Studies in the 1990s at Cornell University found that New York wines, particularly pinot noir, had higher concentrations of resveratrol than wines from five other states and foreign countries. Researchers credited New York's relatively humid climate, which encourages fungal growth — which increases resveratrol in grapes.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.