



HEALTH NOTES



amen
Adventist Medical
Evangelism Network

AMEN's mission is to motivate, train, and equip Seventh-day Adventist health-care professionals to team with pastors and members, uniting the church to restore Christ's ministry of healing to the world, hastening His return. To learn more about AMEN and get involved go to: amensda.org.

Principal contributor: Elvin Adams, MD

Chili Peppers Hurt the Brain

DEMENTIA IS a common disease adversely affecting the quality of life, particularly among the elderly. Dementia is on the rise affecting 35 million people worldwide and will double in 20 years.

Factors that modify the development of dementia include high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes, smoking, depression, diet, and physical inactivity. Chili peppers are one of the most commonly used spices in the world. There is a higher chili intake in Asian countries compared to European countries.

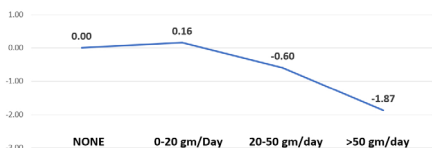
Studies of chili are limited but on the positive side those who regularly eat chili peppers tend to have less obesity and less high blood pressure. A new study provides some negative information about those who eat larger amounts of chili peppers¹.

This study was conducted in China on 2,309 men and 2,543 women who were at least 55 years of age. They were followed between 1989 and 2011. The population included people from both urban and rural communities. This population was surveyed at 9 different times during the 15 years of follow-up. A global cognitive score was calculated using scores of memory, counting backward, and subtraction skills. Immediate and delayed recall of a 10-word list of words was administered.

In addition to the objective tests, people were simply asked if they felt their memory was (1) Very good; (2) good; (3) OK; (4) bad; or (5) very bad. They were also asked if they felt their memory had (1) improved; (2) stayed the same; or (3) declined.

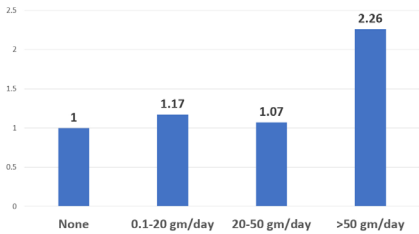
Chili pepper intake was measured in grams per day and varied from none to more than 50 grams per day. Cognitive function scores declined more as the amount of chili peppers eaten per day increased. Those reporting a "Poor Memory" increased as the grams of chili peppers eaten per day increased. It was equally true that those reporting that their memory was steadily getting worse increased among those who ate the highest amount of chili peppers per day.

Cognitive Function by Chili Pepper Intake in Grams per Day

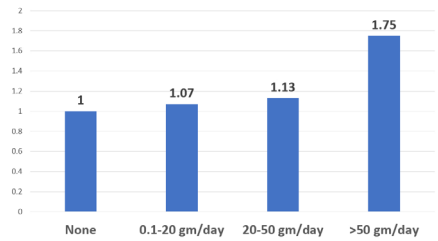




Self Reported “Poor Memory” by Chili Peppers Eaten in Grams/Day



Self Reported “Worsening Memory” by Chili Peppers Eaten in Grams/Day



THE BIBLE doesn't reference chili peppers but spices were largely used in preparing incense (Exodus 30:22).

ELLEN WHITE indicates that spices in the diet weaken intellectual powers and can lead to nervous debility.

“Spices at first irritate the tender coating of the stomach, but finally destroy the natural sensitiveness of this delicate membrane. The blood becomes fevered, the animal propensities are aroused, while the moral **and intellectual powers are weakened.**”

—*Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, p. 46.

“Food prepared with condiments and spices inflames the stomach, corrupts, the blood, and paves the way to stronger stimulants. It induces **nervous debility**, impatience, and lack of self-control.

—*Signs of the Times*, Oct. 27, 1887.

Science hasn't discovered the full story on peppers yet but science appears to be catching up with inspiration.

¹Zumin Shi, et.al, “High Chili Intake and Cognitive Function among 4582 Adults: An Open Cohort Study over 15 Years,” *Nutrients*, May 27, 2019. 11 pages.

