

# A dose of medicine in onion layers

In Numbers (11:15), the fourth book of Moses, it is written that as the Israelites wandered in the Sinai desert, they yearned for the foods they had eaten in Egypt. They specifically mentioned onions, garlic and leeks.

It is not for nothing. It is possible that onions, together with other vegetables, made up an important part of the diet of the pyramid-building slaves more than 3000 years ago.

The onion, which has very few calories, cannot be said to have a very delicious flavour. It was perhaps missed for its medicinal value.

## Bronchitis

How many could have come down with bronchitis or pneumonia while working in the mud to make bricks to build the pyramids? Today, the onion is still one of nature's most healing foods.

It has all vitamins except B12, although some in small quantities. It has most of the minerals, with sulphur and potassium standing out. It alkalinises the blood and thus facilitates the removal of waste products.

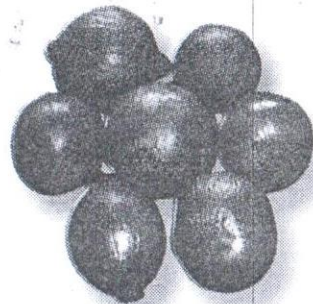
A study conducted at the Netherlands University of Wageningen shows that a flavonoid called quercetin, which gives the onion its antibiotic and decongestant action, is well absorbed in the intestines, whether raw or cooked.

X Glycoquine, also contained in the onion, has the capacity to reduce blood glucose levels, hence having desirable effects on diabetics.

Thiosulfinate, a sulphur containing component of essential oils in the onion, has been shown to stop bronchial allergic

## GOOD LIVING

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reaction in asthmatic cases sometimes felt only a few minutes after eating them, according to a study in the paediatric clinic of the University of Ludwig-Maximilians in Germany, Munich.

## Cancer

Easy breathing, the effect offered by raw onions, has been known to relieve a cough. To take advantage of its healing power the onion, eat it raw.

A study conducted in China, sponsored by the National Cancer Institute of the United States, found that people who eat more onions and garlic have a much lower risk of developing stomach cancer.

Other studies demonstrate the onions capacity, as well as that of garlic, to prevent the development of tumor cells and to neutralise carcinogens. It is, therefore, prudent to consume plenty of onions as a cancer preventive and as a

complement to the treatment of certain types of cancer such as cancer of the stomach and colon.

An investigation carried out in England and Wales showed that children who eat two or more pieces of fruit a day breathe better and have a lower risk of respiratory problems. Those on processed foods have worse respiratory systems and are more likely to sneeze, cough and have running noses. Onions can be eaten raw, boiled, baked or as syrup. Onion water is prepared by soaking a chopped raw onion in a glass of water for several hours.

## Baked

Although onions are best eaten raw, they must be fresh and grown organically. The piquancy – the spicy flavour – is reduced somewhat by washing them for a few minutes and adding lemon. Those suffering from gastric ulcers or gastritis should eat onions either boiled or baked. Boiled in water, the piquancy disappears and they are better tolerated, but their medicinal properties are also diminished.

Cooking time should be short, less than a minute, and the resulting broth should be used as well.

Baked onions are very tasty; although the longer they are in the oven, the less effective they are as medicine. Onion syrup is obtained after boiling several slices of onion and mashing them to paste and adding a few spoonfuls of honey or brown sugar.

Onion, leeks, garlic, lemon, honey, vitamin A and vitamin C can help minimise coughs and improve respiratory functions.

Salt, beer, eggs, spices, and excess fats are dietary components with less beneficial effects on the respiratory system. As the cold season sets in, watch your diet and avoid smoking.