

## Red wine ingredient is a 'wonderdrug'

An ingredient of red wine really is a 'wonderdrug', claim scientists, after research suggested it kills cancer cells and protects the heart and brain from damage.

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Researchers claim moderate drinking of red wine appears to reduce "all causes of mortality" and protects people from age-related disorders such as dementia, diabetes and high blood pressure.

They said that the key ingredient appears to be resveratrol which in small doses acts as an antioxidant protecting organs but in larger quantities kills dangerous cancer cells.

Old age begins at 27 as mental powers start to decline, scientists find.

"The breadth of benefits is remarkable - cancer prevention, protection of the heart and brain from damage, reducing age-related diseases such as inflammation, reversing diabetes and obesity, and many more," said Professor Lindsay Brown of the University of Queensland.

The conclusions were drawn by Professor Brown and her team after a "mini review" of a number of recent studies about the health benefits of red wine published in *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research*.

The biochemists said that red wine appears to contain a number of antioxidants - naturally-occurring protective compounds - which are good for your health but that resveratrol was the most powerful.

They concluded that it "shows therapeutic potential" for cancer and heart disease and may aid in the prevention of age-related disorders that affect the brain and the body.

The ability to protect healthy cells but kill diseased ones was still puzzling scientists, the study claimed, but they said the most likely explanation was low concentrations "activate survival mechanisms of cells while high concentrations turn on the inbuilt death signals in these cells".

But the researchers warned that moderation was the key as too much drinking causes multiple organ damage.

Professor Stephen Taylor, also at the University of Queensland, said that resveratrol is the "compound du jour" and that its beauty was that it is a medicine most people enjoy taking.

"I think that red wine has both some mystique and some historical symbolism in the west and of course, some various pleasures attached to its ingestion, all of which give it a psychological advantage edge, food-wise," he said.

He said "not many of us can or will eat a couple of cups of blueberries a day for years on end" but we were happy to have a glass of wine.

Professor

Brown said the research was starting to explain reports from the last 200 years that drinking red wine improves health.

"It is a cliché that nature is a treasure trove of compounds," she said. "But studies with resveratrol show that this is correct. We need to understand better the vast array of compounds that exist in nature, and determine their potential benefits to health."