

HIBISCUS



An extract from the hibiscus flower could help your heart as much as red wine or tea.

The beautiful hibiscus flower seems more at home tucked behind the ear of a tropical maiden, but one variety called hibiscus sabdariffa brings a bouquet of health benefits too. Scientists from Chung Shan University in Taiwan say an extract from the flower can help control cholesterol levels and reduce heart disease. According to the *Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture*, their research on rats shows that the antioxidant properties of flavonoids, polyphenolic compounds and anthocyanins contained in the flower can prevent the oxidation of the 'bad' **LDL** cholesterol associated with heart disease. In the study, rats were divided into four diet groups, one control, one high cholesterol control and two high cholesterol control diets supplemented with different amounts of hibiscus extract. After 12 weeks blood tests showed that the extract significantly lowered cholesterol content in blood serum and prevented oxidation of LDL cholesterol. Researcher Chau-Jong Wang commented that this was the first study to prove that hibiscus flower extract is as effective as red

wine and tea compounds in reducing cholesterol and lipid build-up in rats.

Hibiscus flower may help prevent heart disease and may have similar cardiovascular health benefits as red wine, say Chinese researchers. Writing in the current edition of the *Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture*, Dr Chang-Che Chen and colleagues from Chung Shan Medical University explain that the plant *hibiscus sabdariffa* has long been used in Chinese folk medicine to treat hypertension (high blood pressure) and liver disorders.

To explore the possible cardiovascular benefits of hibiscus, the researchers studied rats that were divided into four groups and fed different diets. Two groups received a high-cholesterol diet supplemented with different amounts of hibiscus extract, one group was given a high-cholesterol only diet, while the remaining group were fed their usual diet. After 12 weeks, all the rats were given blood tests to assess their health.

The team found that the rats given the hibiscus extract had significantly lower cholesterol levels in their blood than those fed on the high-cholesterol only diet. The hibiscus extract also seemed to successfully prevent the oxidation of low-density lipoproteins, commonly known as "bad" cholesterol, which is associated with heart disease.

The researchers say their findings suggest that hibiscus extract has the potential to prevent cholesterol deposition and may therefore be useful in the prevention and even treatment of a number of cardiovascular diseases in which cholesterol plays a major role. Researcher Dr Chau-Jong Wang said: "Experiments have shown that compounds extracted from red wine and tea reduce cholesterol and lipid build-up in the arteries of rats. This is the first study to show that Hibiscus extract has the same effect."

Hibiscus flower extract may have the same health benefits as red wine and tea according to new research by scientists in Taiwan. Hibiscus contains antioxidants that help control cholesterol levels and reduce heart disease, says the research in Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture.

Chau-Jong Wang and his team at Chung Shan Medical University in the Republic of China found that the antioxidant properties of flavonoids, polyphenolic compounds and anthocyanins contained in the flower can prevent the oxidation of Low-Density Lipoproteins (LDL), which is associated with the disease.

Hibiscus sabdariffa is used in folk medicine to treat hypertension and liver disorder, and is used to make popular soft drinks in various countries across the world. Some health benefits of taking Hibiscus have now been verified: "Experiments have shown that compounds extracted from red wine and tea reduces cholesterol and lipid build-up in the arteries of rats. This is the first study to show that Hibiscus extract has the same effect", says Wang.

In the study, rats were divided in to four groups and given different diets; one control, one high cholesterol control, and two high cholesterol diets supplemented with different amounts of Hibiscus extract. After 12 weeks, the rats were given blood tests to assess their health. Results showed that the extract significantly reduced cholesterol content in blood serum and successfully prevented oxidation of Low-density Lipoproteins.

These data strongly suggest that the extract has potential to prevent cholesterol deposition and may therefore be useful in the prevention and even treatment of a number of cardiovascular diseases in which cholesterol plays a major role.