

## BENEFITS OF CHICKEN SOUP



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Benefits of chicken soup were reported centuries ago by an Egyptian Jewish physician and philosopher, Moshe ben Maimonides. His writings back in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, based on earlier Greek writings, recommended chicken soup for respiratory track symptoms. Although there was no scientific explanation to support this

claim, the knowledge and benefits of chicken soup have been passed down through the generations. My mother gave me her chicken soup recipe when I got married and I still have the original recipe card that I refer to when I make a batch of homemade chicken soup.

Researchers from the Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine Section of the Nebraska Medical Center initiated a laboratory study to evaluate the possibility that chicken soup may be a factor in reducing the inflammatory response associated in colds. The recipe they used was called “Grandma’s Soup”, which included chicken, onions, sweet potato, parsnips, turnips, carrots, celery stems, and parsley, with the addition of salt and pepper. Many tests were conducted on “Grandma’s Soup” (vegetables were

strained) and also some commercially available soups for comparison purposes. The results of the study were reported in the October 2000 issue of CHEST. According to Stephen Rennard, M.D., FCCP, this study presented evidence that chicken soup might have an anti-inflammatory activity. It was also determined that the helpful nutrients were retained in the broth since the vegetables were strained. The commercially available chicken soups showed similar results as compared to “Grandma’s Soup”.

Even though Dr. Rennard’s study was a laboratory study and did not involve human patients, most of us have had first hand experience on the benefits of chicken soup when we have a cold. I don’t necessarily need scientific results to convince me of the positive effects of

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chicken soup. A bowl of hot soup with a whole grain roll helps take the chill away from a cold winter day and provides a nutritious meal.

Even though the vegetables were discarded for the study, this adds soft bulk and helps fill you up. The amount of sodium in commercial soups is always a concern, so make sure you read the Nutritional Facts Label and do a comparison with various brands before making your selection. The American Heart Association recommends that people with high blood pressure and middle aged and older adults need less than 1500 mg of sodium per day. Preparing your own soup does take a little longer, but you have control over the ingredients and salt content. The aroma of the simmering soup, as well as chopping the ingredients, can be very therapeutic.

Have you ever wondered why many recipes have you add salt to your pot of cooking water? Salt lowers the temperature of water by 3 to 5 degrees when added to water. This means that salt water gets hotter than fresh water before it boils, thus reducing cooking time. Salt also enhances the flavor of many recipes, but be cautious of the amount you use. If soup has been oversalted, cut up a raw potato or two and drop it into the soup. The potato will absorb the salt.

Salt has some interesting characteristics. We retain fluids when we eat salty foods. Salt increases the boiling point, but also lowers the freezing point of water. Boiling eggs in salt water will make eggs peel easily and poaching eggs over salted water helps set the egg whites. Apples, pears and potatoes dropped in cold, lightly salted water as they are peeled will retain their color. To prevent mold on cheese,

wrap it in a cloth dampened with salt water before refrigerating. Salt tossed on a grease fire on the stove or in the oven will smother flames. You never want to use water; it will only spatter the burning grease. If you have a sore throat, you can gargle with ½ teaspoon salt stirred in an 8-ounce glass of warm water. Salt has its purpose, but a nice bowl of chicken soup only needs a pinch of salt.

*Added Note:*

*For additional flavor and nutrients, consider adding Barley Miso and/or Dulse Flakes (sea vegetables) to your chicken soup.*