

## Seaweed 'is natural way to protect the heart' as algae helps bring down blood pressure

By [Sophie Borland](#)

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It's hardly the most appetising vegetable side dish.

But tucking into a clump of seaweed at dinner time could help stave off heart attacks, say researchers.

They have discovered key ingredients in the plant that help lower blood pressure, similar to commonly prescribed drugs.



**Tuck in: Seaweed has been a neglected nutrient source in the West**

According to a major study, seaweed is a rich source of proteins known as bioactive peptides – which are also found in milk.

These chemicals have a similar effect to ACE inhibitor drugs, which are widely prescribed to help lower blood pressure and prevent heart attacks and strokes.

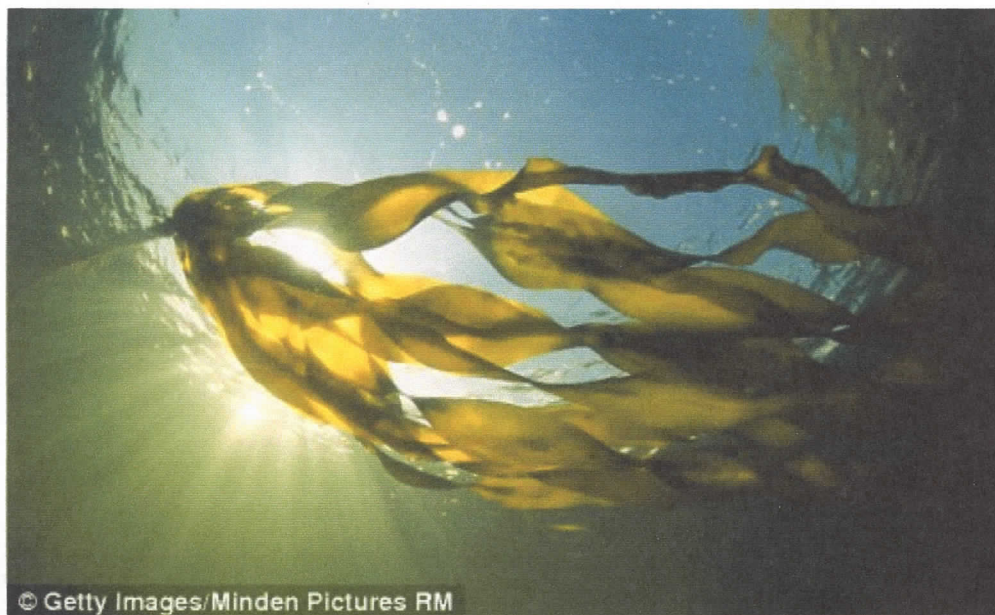
Seaweed is rarely eaten in Britain but has been a staple of the Japanese diet for centuries.

Popular varieties include Wakame, used in miso soup, Kombu, and Nori, which is dried and used to wrap sushi.

One of the few types eaten by Britons is the red seaweed called laver, which is used to make laver bread. But experts insist many of the clumps found on our beaches are, in fact, edible.

Dr Maria Hayes, of the Teagasc Food Research Centre in Dublin, said seaweed - known as macroalgae - was

an 'untapped source' of these healthy ingredients.



**Beneficial: Seaweed is very low in calories and some scientists claim it helps weight loss by preventing the absorption of fat**

The research, published in the American Chemical Society's Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry, looked at evidence from 100 other studies.

It called for more effort to exploit the bioactive compounds and 'their potential for use and delivery to consumers in food products'.

The report stated: 'The variety of macroalga species and the environments in which they are found and their ease of cultivation make macroalgae a relatively untapped source of new bioactive compounds, and more efforts are needed to fully exploit their potential for use and delivery to consumers in food products.'

Seaweed is very low in calories and some scientists claim it helps weight loss by preventing the absorption of fat.

Japanese researchers recently found that rats fed a certain type of seaweed lost 10 per cent of their weight.

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Seaweed contains high levels of iodine so please eat with caution if you have a thyroid disorder as it can change your hormone levels.

- Chicken Boo, B-Town, 24/7/2011 07:43

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