# Warnings issued by doctors on dangers of consuming high capsaicin spicy foods



Doctors have issued warnings about the potential dangers of consuming extremely spicy foods containing high levels of capsaicin, a chili pepper extract that induces heat. According to Dr. Allan Capin of the Cleveland Clinic, vulnerable individuals, especially those with heart conditions such as an enlarged heart or congenital defects, could experience severe health issues ranging from agonizing ulcers to fatal heart attacks.

These warnings come in the wake of the death of 14-year-old Harris Wolobah from Massachusetts. Wolobah died of a heart attack in September 2023 after participating in the "One Chip Challenge," involving the consumption of a highly spicy chip manufactured by Paqui. An autopsy revealed Wolobah had an underlying heart defect exacerbated by the capsaicin.

Paqui has since removed the product from shelves. The incident has led experts to caution that other products marketed as extremely hot could pose similar risks. Products like The Last Dab Xperience, The End: Flatline, and Pepper Palace's Hottest Sauce in the Universe contain extraordinarily high levels of capsaicin and could be dangerous for those with pre-existing heart conditions.

Dr. James Udelson from Tufts Medical Center noted that high levels of capsaicin could lead to an intense pain response, causing blood vessel constriction, elevated blood pressure, and increased heart rate, which can strain the heart and potentially lead to heart attacks. Dr. Jack Rubinstein from the University of Cincinnati added that while capsaicin might cause discomfort in most people, it could have severe consequences for those with underlying health issues.

Preventative cardiology dietitian Michelle Routhenstein warned that high capsaicin levels could also irritate the esophagus, leading to conditions like acid reflux. Historical cases, such as a 47-year-old man in California who tore his esophagus after consuming ghost pepper puree, highlight the risks. Experts suggest moderating spicy food intake and avoiding products labeled as the "hottest in the world."

In contrast, some research points to health benefits of low-dose capsaicin, such as reducing inflammation and alleviating gastrointestinal issues. Dr. Rubinstein cited studies suggesting low quantities can protect the heart, though the dangers of consuming high quantities remain significant.