



University of Missouri

ARTIFACTS

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Thats-a-spicy-meatball! The effects of capsaicin on blood pressure and other processes in the human body

Aaron Chambers

Human beings have always eaten a diverse cornucopia of foods. Among many types of foods, spicy food reigns supreme as the bringer of tears and a burning sensation in the mouth. This is due to the properties of capsaicin, a chemical found in peppers, and peppers being used in many spicy foods. Capsaicin affects the heat receptors in the mouth, causing calcium channels to open simulating a burning sensation of the mouth. Many times this response causes a person to either drink a liquid to cool the sensation, or eat some non-spicy food, often resulting in what is called the losing of a bet. Shortly after the ingestion of capsaicin, the body begins to respond to the fake heat by appropriately trying to cool itself down through sweating and vasodilatation. Due to this response we feel that the ingestion of capsaicin would effectively cool the body and the temperature of the body would be lower than what it was before. In addition we thought that peripheral body temperature will increase and blood pressure and heart rate will decrease.

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