Just two tablespoons of olive oil a day could cut heart disease risk

By Pat Hagan

Two tablespoons of olive oil a day almost halves the risk of heart disease while one spoonful cuts the risk by 28 per cent

Olive oil has long been known to be good for the heart.

Now scientists have found out exactly how good it can be. And it doesn't take much to enjoy the benefits.

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According to their research, just two tablespoons of olive oil almost halves your risk of dying from heart disease. The equivalent of one tablespoon cuts the risk by around 28 per cent.

There have been numerous studies highlighting olive oil's benefits to the heart, but few have investigated the extent to which this translates into reduced death rates.

The results are based on the diets of nearly 41,000 adults in the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition, which began 20 years ago.

While the research, published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, found olive oil does not appear to reduce cancer deaths, there was an enormous impact on the death toll from heart disease.

Last night British experts said the results showed that olive oil, a large part of the so-called Mediterranean diet which is rich in fish, fruit and vegetables, played an even bigger part in preventing heart disease than first thought.

Super food: Olive oil is rich in monounsaturated fats and polyphenols that can reduce the risk of blood cuts

The researchers stressed that they had allowed for the benefits of other ingredients in the Mediterranean diet when assessing olive oil's powers.

'These findings are very significant,' said Dr Charles Knight of the British Cardiovascular Society. 'This is confirmation that olive oil is good for the heart.'

Olive oil is rich in healthy monounsaturated fats and polyphenols, compounds that can dampen inflammation in the body and possibly reduce the risk of clots.

Spanish researchers studied data on the eating habits of 40,622 men and women between 29 and 69, tracking them for just over 13 years to see what effect olive oil had on death rates. In the study period, just under 2,000 of the recruits died, including 956 from cancer and 416 from heart disease.

The data showed that heart death victims were among the lowest consumers of olive oil. Those who got through 29 grams or more a day – just over two tablespoons – were 44 per cent less likely to die from cardiac problems