

Health Benefits of Tea

It is important to note that tea is a healthy beverage, not a medicine, and its potential healthful effects are cumulative, resulting from regular consumption over a period of time. Also note that **all** teas are healthy, so in order to maximize the potential health benefits, it is best to incorporate a combination of different types of good quality loose leaf tea and tisanes into your daily routine. Most important is to drink the teas that you truly enjoy drinking and prepared in the way you prefer them.

Many claims have been made regarding the health benefits of “true” teas; however, not all have been substantiated yet by reputable, well-designed scientific studies. Reputable, well-designed studies have identified that consuming as few as three (3) cups of tea per day may support our bodies in the following ways:

Cardiovascular Health

There is a potential reduction in the risk of cardiovascular disease, which includes atherosclerosis, heart disease and stroke, because it reduces the buildup of plaque in the arteries. In addition, studies have also shown that regular consumption of tea may decrease cholesterol levels by as much as 10% for LDL cholesterol and 6% for total cholesterol.

Neurological Health

The antioxidants in tea have the ability to reduce brain cell death and encourage neurons to repair themselves. Tea’s polyphenols have been shown to inhibit the activity of certain toxic compounds that are associated with the development of Alzheimer’s Disease. Finally, the caffeine in tea has been shown to help improve mental alertness, focus, and memory.

Bone Health

There is a potential link between regular tea consumption and a reduction in the risk of osteoporosis. In one study, participants who regularly consumed tea had a higher hip bone density and had lower bone loss over a four-year period.

Reduced Risk of Certain Cancers

Studies have shown that regular consumption of tea may reduce the risk of developing certain types of cancer, particularly cancers of the lung, esophagus, stomach, skin, colon, liver, and other organs. Several of the polyphenols present in tea have shown an effect on slowing the growth of cancer cells by binding with toxic compounds that cause oxidative damage. The antioxidants gallic acid and EGCG may reduce oxidative and cell damage from free radicals.

Regulate Blood Glucose (Sugar)

Polysaccharides in tea have been shown to assist in the reduction of blood sugar by inhibiting alpha-glucosidase, which is an enzyme that converts starch into glucose.

Oral Health

Compounds in tea, particularly catechins and theaflavins, have exhibited antibacterial properties that inhibit the growth of three separate strains of bacteria that naturally occur in our mouth. In addition, the flavonoids present in tea may reduce the formation of dental plaque and cavities, which may also lead to a lower incidence of periodontal diseases such as gingivitis and periodontitis. Lastly, there is some naturally occurring fluoride present in tea leaves, which supports healthy tooth enamel.

Reduced Risk of Arthritis and Inflammation

The antioxidant EGCG has demonstrated anti-inflammatory activity by inhibiting the activation of proteins that have been linked to inflammation and protecting joints from oxidative damage and chronic inflammation.

Immune System Support

There is evidence that the theanine and flavonoids present in tea support the immune system and improve the body’s ability to fight off bacterial and viral infection. The antioxidant gallic acid has demonstrated anti-viral properties.

Slow Down Biological Aging

The antioxidants in tea support the body’s cells in counteracting oxidative damage and premature ageing. One study found that those who consume tea regularly have longer telomeres, which are DNA sequences at the end of chromosomes that naturally shorten over time due to cell replication and ageing. It is believed that telomere length may

be a marker of biological age. The antioxidants gallic acid and EGCG may reduce oxidative and cell damage from free radicals.

Maintain Healthy Weight

While I advocate tea, as part of a well-balanced diet along with regular exercise, as a great way to maintain a healthy weight, I have yet to find indisputable evidence that it alone can be used as an effective method for weight loss. One advantage that tea offers, however, is that it is a near-zero-calorie beverage when consumed plain, and rich in healthy nutrients. This makes it a great beverage option for those who are watching their caloric intake. Claims have been made that the caffeine and EGCG together boost metabolism and burn extra calories; however, this may only translate to the loss of a few pounds, not necessarily significant weight loss.

Hydration

Tea contributes toward daily fluid intake, even though caffeine is a natural diuretic. Tea consumption counteracts fluid loss, staving off dehydration. On a side note, the diuretic effects of the tea may support urinary tract health.

Stress Reduction

Tea consumption may lower stress and stress-related fatigue. One study indicated a potential link between EGCG and the recovery from stress-induced fatigue. Another study showed that consuming tea may assist the body to more quickly moderate cortisol levels. In addition, theanine has been linked with stimulating calming and relaxing effects on the body. Gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), an amino acid present in Pu-er, is essential for brain metabolism and reduces anxiety and stress-related messages from reaching motor centers of the brain. While studies have not yet definitively identified specific compounds in tea that may lead to stress reduction, it is worthwhile to note that the simple act of preparing and drinking tea is a relaxing and meditative process that may influence this outcome.

We will continue to update this section as new research findings become available. If you have a question regarding something you read or heard about the health benefits of tea, please feel free to e-mail Kristine your question at kristine@pleasuresoftea.com.