

[A Cup Of Green Tea May Help Keep The Doctor Away In Texas](#)

There's an ancient Chinese proverb that states, "Better to be deprived of food for three days, than tea for one." They must have known something that Westerners are just discovering: tea, especially green tea, has numerous health benefits.

The Chinese have preached about the medicinal benefits of green tea since ancient times. They've used it to treat everything from headaches to depression. In fact, green tea has been used for medicinal purposes in China for at least 4,000 years and it is growing in popularity in Dallas, Houston and throughout Texas.

These days, scientific research from all over the world is providing hard evidence for the health benefits long associated with drinking green tea. A recent issue of the Journal of the National Cancer Institute published the results of a study that showed drinking green tea reduced the risk of esophageal cancer in Chinese men and women by nearly 60 percent. In a recent study, University of Purdue researchers concluded that a certain compound in green tea inhibits the growth of cancer cells. And there's newer research showing that drinking green tea lowers total cholesterol levels, as well as improving the ratio of good (HDL) cholesterol to bad (LDL) cholesterol.

According to recent research studies in the West and in China, the medical conditions for which drinking green tea is supposed to be of help include:

- Cancer
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- High cholesterol levels
- Cardiovascular disease
- Infection
- Impaired immune function

So what makes green tea so special? Its secret lies in its richness in catechin polyphenols, particularly epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), a powerful anti-oxidant that not only inhibits the growth of cancer cells but also kills cancer cells without harming healthy tissue. And EGCG is known to inhibit the abnormal formation of blood clots. The last benefit is important when you consider that the formation of abnormal blood clots is the leading cause of heart attacks and stroke.

Now researchers are making connections between the effects of drinking green tea and the "French Paradox." Researchers were puzzled that, despite consuming a fat-rich diet, the French have a lower incidence of heart disease than people in the U.S. do. Red wine, which is consumed by the gallon in France, contains resveratrol, a polyphenol that limits the negative effects of smoking and a fatty diet. Researchers from the University of Kansas determined that EGCG is twice as powerful as resveratrol. This may explain why the rate of heart disease among Japanese men is also quite low, even though approximately 75 percent are smokers. But that doesn't give anyone the excuse to start smoking or to not give it up entirely.

But why don't other Chinese teas have similar benefits? Green, oolong, and black teas are all made from the leaves of the Camellia sinensis plant. Green tea is different because of the way it is processed. Green tea leaves are steamed, preventing the EGCG compound from being oxidized. By contrast, black and oolong tea leaves are fermented. This results in the EGCG being converted into other compounds that are not nearly as effective in preventing and fighting various diseases.

New evidence has also emerged that green tea can even help people in Dallas, Houston and elsewhere in Texas who are on diets. The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition recently published the results of a study at the University of Geneva in Switzerland. The study found that men who were given a combination of caffeine and green tea extract burned more calories than those given only caffeine or a placebo.

Green tea can also benefit your smile by helping prevent tooth decay. Just as the tea's bacteria-destroying abilities can help prevent food poisoning, it can also kill the bacteria that cause dental plaque. Meanwhile, skin preparations containing green tea -- from deodorants to creams -- have started hitting the market.

Okay. So green tea is good for you. Are there any negative effects of consuming this tasty beverage? The only downside reported from drinking green tea is insomnia because, like most other teas, it contains caffeine. However, green tea does have less caffeine than coffee. There are approximately thirty to sixty mg. of caffeine in six to eight ounces of tea, compared to over one-hundred mg. in eight ounces of coffee.

Another new study suggests that green tea may also help ease the inflammation and pain of rheumatoid arthritis. The study findings are preliminary, emphasized lead researcher Salah-uddin Ahmed, an investigator at the University of Michigan Health System in Ann Arbor. For patients with rheumatoid arthritis, this lining of tissue surrounding the capsule of the joints is inflamed, leading to long-term joint damage and chronic pain. About 2.1

million Americans have rheumatoid arthritis, according to the Arthritis Foundation.

The researchers focused on whether EGCG had the ability to block the activity of two potent molecules, IL-6 and cyclooxygenase-2 (Cox-2), which play a role in breaking down bone in an RA joint. The study found that the two molecules were suppressed by the EGCG. While it is difficult to quantify exactly the effect of the suppression, the EGCG "blocked them significantly," according to Ahmed. EGCG also blocked the production of prostaglandin E2, another compound that can cause joint inflammation.

This new study is one of the first to focus on the benefits of green tea on rheumatoid arthritis, which could be good news for rheumatoid arthritis patients, offering a non-drug option to keep their pain under control.

While the research is not yet conclusive and more study is needed, Ahmed said people might want to try drinking three or four 8-ounce cups of green tea per day. "Try different brands," he suggested. "The flavors may taste slightly different. Drink it continuously throughout the day," he said, to keep blood levels more constant.

As you'll discover, what you put into your body will affect your health. And your health, good or bad, will eventually affect your bank account.

About the Author

Pat Carpenter writes for Precedent Insurance Company. Precedent puts a new spin on health insurance. Learn more at Precedent.com

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