



Tea: *The Elixir of Life*

Delicious, low-calorie, and brimming with antioxidants, tea is quickly becoming the most commonly consumed beverage worldwide, after water. Even in the U.S., its popularity is rapidly growing. And why not? With the health benefits you stand to gain, you, too, will want to drink up.

SOAK UP THE HEALTH BENEFITS

It is no wonder that tea is the beverage most commonly enjoyed by centenarians around the world. Tea is full of powerful antioxidants that improve concentration, gently boost energy, and make people happier. The free radical-inhibiting property of tea is more potent than that of vitamin E, and tea is a proven preventive and treatment for atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries). The polyphenols in tea, especially the catechins, are powerful antioxidants that help ward off diabetes and cancer.

To get the most health from your tea, brew it fresh from tea bags or loose leaves and herbs, as instant and bottled teas contain less active compounds. Let the tea steep for three to five minutes to extract the most beneficial compounds. Drink to your health!

CUT THE MORNING COFFEE

For many people, the first thing they reach for in the morning is coffee. Although it may initially give you a jolt, coffee actually depletes your vital essence, “borrowing” energy that you didn’t have in the first place.

Caffeine acts as a central nervous system stimulant. It causes you to experience stress, anxiety, a racing mind, and even insomnia, working against your attempts to relax the body and calm the mind. A healthier alternative to coffee is herbal tea. On average, a cup of black tea contains about one third of the caffeine you would get from the same cup of coffee. Green tea contains about one sixth of that amount.

Of course, caffeine content will vary depending on the particular tea and the brewing time. One way to naturally decaffeinate your tea is to steep for 45 seconds, pour out the liquid but keep the tea leaves, then add fresh boiling water and let it steep for 3-5 minutes or longer to allow the beneficial polyphenols to be extracted from the tea.

Aside from the health benefits, tea is a zero-calorie beverage, making it your best choice for weight loss. Pass on the diet soda, loaded with sugar and bone-weakening bubbles, and go for tea.

It is best to drink tea unsweetened and without milk, which can minimize some of the health benefits. To sweeten the tea without the extra calories, forgo the sugar and try instead honey, stevia products, or a stick of cinnamon.

THE HEALTHY VARIETIES OF HERBAL TEAS

Aromatic and chock full of amazing health benefits, herbal teas are made from various leaves, roots, bark, or flowers. Here are just a few:

- Ginger: Soothes the digestive system and keeps your energy fired up
- Chamomile: Settles the stomach and is calming and soothing for the nervous system
- Peppermint: Increases healthy gastric secretions, relaxes the intestines, and settles the stomach
- Dandelion: Detoxifies and supports healthy liver functions
- Valerian: A natural herbal substitute for sleeping pills

