

# The Medicinal Use of Green Tea

*Camellia sinensis* or Green Tea has been a traditional drink of Asia for thousands of years, and for very good reasons. It grows as a 15 meter shrub in the shade with dark green shiny leaves draped with scented flowers in the fall. The young shoots contain the highest amount flavonoids and active constituents. Flavonoids boost the body's immune system and also help other vitamins work more effectively. But this is just the beginning of Green Tea's healing ability.

When leaves of *Camellia sinensis* are allowed to wilt, and then rolled and steamed (or roasting or sweating) this is green tea. For black tea the leaves are allowed to ferment first. Oolongs and formosas are partially fermented. Green tea does have caffeine but at a concentration much lower than coffee. Most of the caffeine is released from the leaves on the first cup.

Historically, green tea is drunk to promote longevity and improve mental function and prevent disease. Moreover, it has been scientifically proven to:

- Be a free radical scavenger by stimulating B cell proliferation.
- Cause direct damage to bacteria, protozoa and viral membranes.
- Increase phase II detoxification and down regulate phase I, thus balancing the liver's detox system to allow elimination to be complete and thorough.
- Have antioxidant properties six times higher than that of black tea.
- Polyphenols in green tea enhance gap junctions (how cells communicate) which have been shown to decrease tumor development. Also has an implication for helping patients with Alzheimer's & Parkinson's diseases.
- Bind directly to some carcinogenic substances, esp. seen in Epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG) the most active constituent of green tea. Protects against colon, lung, breast and other types of cancer.
- Protects against oxidation of tissues caused by radiation. Important for those undertaking cancer therapies of chemotherapy and radiation. Even for those who are under high stress, poor environments, smokers and the nutritionally deficient.
- Have an anti-lipidemic effect when taken for extended periods of time (a few cups per day for a few months to see measurable results on a lab exam). Green tea may also reduce atherosclerosis in some individuals.
- Green tea has also been proven to lower blood sugar levels in some with diabetes.
- Keeps gums and teeth healthy and decreases cavities.
- Green tea extract is a powerful antioxidant that has shown promise in the treatment of degenerative eye disease; 600-700 mg of a 95% polyphenol extract is suggested.

So, how is it prepared?

By heating freshly filtered cool water to just boiling, pour into a cup with about 1-2 teaspoons of green tea in a muslin bag, or strain after 3-5 minutes of steeping. Can also use tea balls, bags and tea spoons. Discard first cup if caffeine is not desired, medicinal effects are still in the first 3-4 uses of green tea.

Or, put a ¼ or 1/3 cup of green tea in a 'sun tea' jar, set in the hot sun for an hour or so (water should be warm to the touch when finished), strain and pour over lots of ice. Can sweeten if desired, but taste it first. Some are already presweetened naturally. Discard after 3 days. Or consider capsules from a reputable supplement company.

For a kick, add other herbs and teas to the green for even better health. Some examples include: *Larrea* (chaparral) – for liver support and anti-everything. *Hydrastis* (Oregon grape root) for protection from flu's and help increase immune system. *Passiflora* (Passionflower) for anxiety and nervousness. Or Rose hips, which has the highest concentration of vitamin C. Add a pinch or two to a cup or glass of tea. The key is to be consistent with green tea, don't expect a panacea overnight. Green tea is subtle but powerful. A billion people can't be wrong and research can finally back up the folklore and legends.

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