

**Family Living  
Focus**

by  
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Mercer County



**Tea Benefits**

There's nothing like sipping on a hot beverage in the morning, or when you're socializing with friends, but if coffee is your only selection of hot beverages, you could be making a better health choice—tea.

Tea is gaining popularity, and larger cities now have "tea houses" as well as "coffee houses." Why the new interest in this "old" beverage? Nutrition Research Specialist at Pritikin Longevity Center, James J. Kenney, PhD, RD, LD, FACN, gives the following health benefits that tea may provide:

- Tea (both black and green) contains a variety of plant chemicals called phytochemicals. The phytochemicals, called flavonoids, found in teas may reduce the tendency of blood platelets to stick to artery walls.

A recent study found a 70 percent lower risk of a fatal heart attack in those who consumed at least 2-3 cups of black tea a day compared to those who were not tea drinkers.

- Tea is good for your bones, too. The Archives of Internal Medicine (May 13, 2002) published a study indicating that

those who drank tea for 10 or more years had the strongest bones. Tea is a good source of fluoride and other phytochemicals that may promote stronger bones.

The fluoride also makes tea good for your teeth. The tannins in tea may suppress the growth of plaque bacteria. Stronger teeth and less plaque are the keys to keeping your teeth into old age.

The natural phytochemicals in tea also act as antioxidants to neutralize free radicals providing a defense against a variety of cancers.

Tea does contain caffeine (unless it's decaffeinated), but for those wanting to decrease their caffeine consumption, tea is a better choice with 30-50 milligrams of caffeine per cup compared with coffee at 135 milligrams a cup.

The above health benefits are provided by both green and black tea, although some research does lean toward green tea as a better choice for cancer prevention. Green and black teas come from the same plant, but green tea is dried for a shorter time than black tea and does not go through the short fermenting process used for black tea.

There are many types of tea to try. Black tea has a stronger flavor. This is a good choice for those trying to switch from coffee to tea. English breakfast is probably the most popular form of black tea. Oolong tea looks like black tea, but has a more golden color, and a sweet flavor.

Green tea has a mild pleasant flavor, and is good hot or cold. There is a wide variety of herb teas on the market, but they have not been studied as the teas mentioned above, so their flavonoid content is not known.

Dietitian, Nancy Berkoff, suggests increasing your tea consumption by making iced tea. Chilling tea does not affect its health aspects.

To make the perfect iced tea she recommends bringing one cup of water per tea bag or teaspoon of dried tea to a rolling boil. Measure the tea into a glass container. (Plastic and metal tend to pick up extra flavors.) Pour the boiling water over the tea and allow it to steep to the desired strength. Don't leave the tea in too long or it will acquire an acidic taste. Add a little ice to speed the chilling process. Place your tea in the refrigerator and allow it to cool for several hours. Brewed tea will keep its flavor for at least two days in the refrigerator.

You can add more flavor to your tea by adding a splash of fresh fruit juice, or by freezing fruit juice in ice cube trays for fruity ice cubes.

Believe me, no one likes a large cup of Dunkin Donuts coffee more than I do, but research shows that I could be making a healthier beverage choice—next time I think I'll try tea. (But I'm still getting a donut!)

**Time For Tea Could  
Help Diabetics**

COLUMBUS, Ohio — I've heard that drinking tea could be good for people with diabetes. How does that work?

Well, there is evidence from testing on rat cells that suggests drinking tea might boost insulin activity. That would be good news for the 17 million Americans with diabetes, as well as the estimated 16 million who have pre-diabetes, or "impaired glucose tolerance."

With Type II diabetes, the body loses the ability to make enough insulin or effectively use the insulin that it does make. This allows glucose to build up in the blood, and that's something you definitely don't want. Over time, high blood sugar can endanger your eyes, kidneys, blood vessels, heart and limbs.

In a study published in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry, researchers tested tea's effect on fat cells from rats.

Fat cells are sensitive to insulin, so they make good testing material. The researchers mixed sugar, insulin and various tea extracts into the cells and watched what happened.

They found that plain old black tea, as well as green and oolong teas, boosted insulin activity as much as 15 times for up to six hours. Both caffeinated and decaffeinated teas had the same effect. However, adding milk, soy milk or non-dairy creamer de-

creased that boost in insulin activity significantly. Lemon juice had no effect.

The researchers have not tested tea's effects in humans, but they have identified the components that seem to have the most impact. An antioxidant called epigallocatechin gallate seemed to boost insulin activity the most, and it is found in all three types of tea. In black tea, tannins, theaflavins and other compounds also joined the effort.

Herbal teas — which aren't true teas at all because they don't come from the tea plant *Camellia sinensis* — had no effect on insulin activity. The vast majority of instant teas also had no effect, and neither did commercially prepared iced teas.

This study adds to evidence gathered over the past 20 years in which scientists have uncovered numerous health benefits associated with antioxidants in tea. Studies suggest tea can have positive effects on atherosclerosis, high blood pressure, infectious diseases and immune response.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center.

Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.

**Scholarship Program Offers  
\$1,000 To Ag Students**

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Students pursuing careers in agriculture are encouraged to apply for scholarships sponsored by Agrilliance, Land O'Lakes Feed and Croplan Genetics.

High school seniors from throughout the country who will enroll in a two- or four-year agronomy or livestock curriculum in the fall of 2003 are eligible to apply. Fifty \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded.

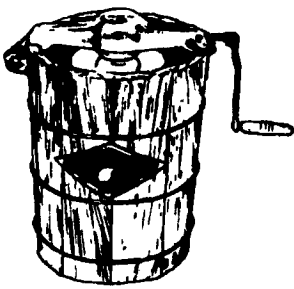
"Students with leadership abilities and an interest in agriculture are needed to fill a variety of po-

sitions in our industry," said Annette Degnan, scholarship committee chairperson. Since its formation 13 years ago, the Careers in Agriculture scholarship program has awarded more than \$350,000 in scholarships to rural youth.

Applications are available from participating local cooperatives or on the Agrilliance Website ([www.agrilliance.com](http://www.agrilliance.com)) in the Careers section or the Land O'Lakes Feed Website ([www.lolfeed.com](http://www.lolfeed.com)).

All applications must be postmarked by March 3, 2003. Winners will be notified in May. For more information or to request an application, call (800) 232-3639, Ext. 4584.

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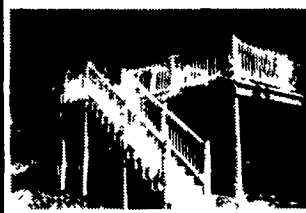
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