

Notes
on
Green Tea

an
OPEN TOPIC
report



12 Scientific Findings on Green Tea

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Introduction

This short report provides basic information about green tea – different types of green tea, the application and potential benefits of using green tea products, a brief look at the scientific opinion, potential side effects, and resources for more information.



The three main types of tea (green, black, and oolong) are all produced from the *Camellia sinensis* plant. The difference in what the tea looks and tastes like and even the unique beneficial compounds of the particular tea are the result of different growing methods and how the leaves are processed. Black tea is fully fermented, oolong is partially fermented, and green tea is unfermented.

Types of Green Tea: A Quick List

If you live in a Western country and you stroll into a supermarket meaning to buy a pack of green tea, chances are the only sort you'll find is one with a label simply stating "Green Tea". Simple as it may be, it's usually an indication of low quality. If you're serious about finding a better quality green tea, try your local Chinese food market. You can also browse around the internet for reputable online stores - this way you should have a much wider selection to choose from.

Question is: how many kinds of green tea are there?

As with coffee, there are too many types of green tea to summarize in a short report, but here goes:

■ The most common variety found in most supermarkets is the low-grade **Gunpowder**. It's popular partly because it's cheap, and tends to stay relatively fresh for longer because the tea is rolled into small round pellets (giving the tea its martial sounding name).

■ One of the most popular green teas in China is *Longjing*, or **Dragon Well** tea. This variety is known for its bright green color, and because of the high quality is also one of the most expensive types of green tea. Because of the steep price and low production numbers, imitations are common – something to be aware of when you shop for this variety.

■ Another famous Chinese green tea variant is the so-called **Green Snail Spring** (*Bi Luo Chun* in Chinese), grown in the Dong Ting mountain of Jiangsu Province. This tea is much loved for its delicate appearance, fruity taste and distinct flowery aroma. As with *Longjing* tea, imitations of Green Snail Spring are common.

■ The coastal mountains of Fujian Province in China are another source of organic green tea. Fujian green teas include the **Fur Tip** (*Mao Feng*), **Jade Sword** (*Cui Jian*) and **Dragon Pearl** (*Mo Li Hua*) varieties.

■ Japan has their own proud tea traditions, with the **Jade Dew** (*Gyokuro*) variety being of the highest grade. The name refers to the pallid shade of green when infused in hot water. The distinct flavor is partly from growing the tea in shady areas.

🍵 Many Japanese tea drinkers prefer a sweeter type of green tea known as **Sencha**. One factor that distinguishes *Sencha* from Jade Dew is that tea leaves used to make the former are exposed to direct sunlight. Cheaper than Dragon Well or Jade Dew, it's the kind of tea that can be enjoyed every day without busting the budget.

🍵 An even sweeter green tea is one used in Japanese tea ceremonies. **Mecha** - or "Buds and Tips tea" - is made from leaf buds and tips collected from the early crops. According to aficionados, the tea is not only esthetically attractive but the taste reminds more of an exotic desert than the usual variant of the popular beverage. *Mecha* also counts as one of the more expensive types of green teas, but well worth the extra effort to find it, and the extra money spent.

Why The Fuss About A Beverage?

After the good press green tea has been getting the past few years, many people are aware that it has benefits reaching far beyond the obvious one as thirst-quenching beverage.

Possible applications of green tea and green tea extracts include prevention and treatment of a variety of cancers, including breast, stomach, and skin cancers. Other potential uses include improving mental alertness, aiding in weight loss, lowering cholesterol levels, and protecting skin from sun damage.

What Do The Scientists Say?

Although some health experts have suggested that green tea may help protect against or slow the growth of certain cancers, studies in people have shown mixed results.

There is also evidence that indicate an improvement in mental alertness as a result of green tea preparations, though this is most likely because of its caffeine content.

Many have also touted the use of green tea as an aid in weight loss, to lower blood cholesterol levels, or to protect the skin from sun damage. As of yet, there is not enough reliable scientific data to confirm these hopes.

Studies are also being done to learn more about the components in green tea and their effects on conditions such as cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.

Potential Side Effects To Look Out For

Green tea is safe for most adults when used in moderate amounts, but as with almost any kind of food or beverage, some people may have reasons to be more cautious.

- There have been some case reports of liver problems in people taking concentrated green tea extracts. This problem does not seem to be connected with green tea infusions or beverages. Although these cases are very rare and the evidence is not definitive, experts suggest that concentrated green tea extracts be taken with food, and that people should discontinue use and consult a health care

practitioner if they have a liver disorder or develop symptoms of liver trouble, such as abdominal pain, dark urine, or jaundice.

- Green tea and green tea extracts contain caffeine. Caffeine can cause insomnia, anxiety, irritability, upset stomach, nausea, diarrhea, or frequent urination in some people.

- Green tea contains small amounts of vitamin K, which can make anticoagulant drugs, such as warfarin, less effective.

A final word of advice: it's always a good idea to tell your health care providers about any complementary and alternative practices you use. Give them a full picture of what you do to manage your health. This will help ensure coordinated and safe care.

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Other Resources

Medline Plus: Article on Green Tea (*Camellia sinensis*)

http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/patient-green_tea.html

Department of Veterans Affairs: Probing the Benefits of Green Tea

http://www.research.va.gov/news/features/green_tea.cfm

Wikipedia Article on Green Tea

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_tea

National Center for Complimentary and Alternative Medicine

<http://nccam.nih.gov/>

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