

Q. I've heard that green tea is good for your health. Should I be drinking green tea daily for better health knowing it also contains caffeine?

A. There are many references to the benefits of green tea in the media. The health claims of green tea are at best controversial. Some data appear to show a benefit, and the next research article shows no benefit.

Green Tea



The green tea growers recently petitioned the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to allow them to put a health claim for green tea on their packaging. The FDA reviewed 105 scientific studies on green tea and concluded there was not enough convincing evidence to make any health claims for drinking green tea.

Green tea, made from plant leaves, is a good source of antioxidants, but so are spinach, romaine lettuce, and many other brightly colored vegetables and fruits. Good sources of foods high in antioxidants other than green tea include pomegranate juice, blueberries, strawberries, spinach and other leafy greens, and citrus.

Actually, all of the unrefined plant based foods are good sources of antioxidants and other phytochemicals that are protective to your health. Rather than concentrating on just one or two sources such as green tea, a good nutrition principle is to eat a wide variety of unrefined fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes. The NIH DASH Diet for good

heart health recommends as many as 8-10 servings of fresh fruits and vegetables daily.

As far as harm is concerned by drinking green tea, I'm not aware of any research that shows any health problems when consumed in moderate amounts (1-2 cups daily). If you like a hot drink and enjoy green tea, a cup or two a day apparently has no health hazards – other than a small amount of caffeine which may cause

sleep difficulty in some people if consumed too soon before going to bed. It may increase anxiety in persons prone to anxiety attacks.

Regarding the health effects of caffeine, the National Center for Complimentary and Alternative Medicine provides this warning, "Caffeine can cause insomnia, anxiety, irritability, upset stomach, nausea, diarrhea, or frequent urination in some people. Caffeine can also raise blood pressure."

References:

1. AP News release on green tea and the FDA response. MSNBC. Nov. 2007. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12718769/>
2. NIH. Green tea. National Center for Complimentary and Alternative Medicine. Nov. 2007. <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/greentea/#science>
3. NIH. DASH Diet. NHLBI. Nov. 2007. http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new_dash.pdf

