

Review on Herbal Teas

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Abstract:

Herbal tea is essentially an herbal mixture made from leaves, seeds and/ or roots of various plants. As per popular misconception, they are not derived from the usual tea plants, but rather from what are called as 'tisanes'. There are several kinds of tisanes (herbal teas) that have been used for their medicinal properties. Some of them being consumed for its energizing properties to help induce relaxation, to curb stomach or digestive problems and also strengthen the immune system. Some of the popular herbal teas are Black tea, Green tea, Chamomile tea, Ginger tea, Ginseng tea, Peppermint tea, Cinnamon tea etc. Some of these herbal teas possess extremely strong medicinal benefits such as, Astragalus tea, a Chinese native herb that is used for its anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial properties; which in many cases helps people living with HIV and AIDS. Demonstrating very few demerits, researchers continue to examine and vouch for the health benefits of drinking herbal teas.

Key words: Camellia Sinensis, tisanes, types, medical benefits, ability to cure various ailments, advantages, disadvantages.

INTRODUCTION:

Herbal tea, according to many, look like tea and is brewed as the same way as tea, but in reality it is not considered a tea at all. This is due to the fact that they do not originate from the Camellia Sinensis bush, the plant from which all teas are made [1]. Herbal teas are actually mixtures of several ingredients, and are more accurately known as 'tisanes.' Tisanes are made from combinations of dried leaves, seeds, grasses, nuts, barks, fruits, flowers, or other botanical elements that give them their taste and provide the benefits of herbal teas [2].

Unlike most other forms of tea, herbal teas do not contain caffeine. They also taste great and are easy to drink. Most herbal teas may consist of one main herbal ingredient or a blend of herbal ingredients, intended to bring about a specific purpose, such as relaxation, rejuvenation, relief from a specific condition, amongst other things [3].

It is also important to understand that there are a huge variety of herbal teas available in the market, each of which is designed to have a specific therapeutic or medicinal benefit. However, there are some general benefits that can be obtained from most herbal teas, and these are as follows:

- ✓ achieving a more calm and relaxed state of mind
- ✓ supporting heart health
- ✓ aiding with stomach and digestive problems
- ✓ providing cleansing properties for the body
- ✓ promoting energy and wellness
- ✓ nourishing the nervous system
- ✓ strengthening the immune system
- ✓ providing antioxidants to the body
- ✓ boosting energy levels and invigorating the body
- ✓ relieving stress
- ✓ helping to avoid colds
- ✓ stimulating the internal organs
- ✓ promoting a good night's sleep
- ✓ caffeine free and tastes great [4].



Image 1: Green tea

So what are the ingredients a cup of herbal tea usually contains?

The thing is, there are many different herbs that can be found in herbal tea, each with a different use and purpose. Some common ones include:

- ✓ Chamomile – is renowned for its calming properties and is also said to be anti-inflammatory and anti-spasmodic
- ✓ Chrysanthemum – is sweet-tasting and is able to reduce body heat resulting from fever. It also helps protect against liver damage and neutralises toxins.
- ✓ Cinnamon – is calming and helps to support healthy circulation and digestion.
- ✓ Ginseng – stimulates vitality and helps the body stay healthy.
- ✓ Ginger root – is excellent for improving circulation, and is one of the best herbs for improving digestion, nausea, lung congestion, and arthritis.
- ✓ Parsley – is a diuretic and helps with kidney function.
- ✓ Peppermint – is good for stress relief. It also helps with stomachs and digestive issues and helps to freshen the breath.
- ✓ Red Clover - use as a medicine for menopausal symptoms, cancer, mastitis, joint disorders, asthma, bronchitis, psoriasis and eczema. It is not recommended for children, pregnant or breastfeeding women.
- ✓ Rose hips – are a natural source of vitamin C and bioflavonoids. They are a liver, kidney, and blood tonic, and are a good remedy for fatigue, colds, and cough.

- ✓ Sarsaparilla – promotes energy and healthy skin.
- ✓ Slippery elm – helps to relieve stomach cramps and other gastrointestinal problems [5].



Image 2: Black tea and its plant

The following explains the advantages and disadvantages of the consumption of herbal teas.

ADVANTAGES:

Herbal Teas are commonly consumed for its therapeutic and energizing properties, since it can help to induce relaxation. Being able to aid with stomach or digestive problems, herbal teas can help provide cleansing properties to the body, and strengthens the immune system as well. It is important to note that different herbs might have different medicinal properties, which thus allows us to make our own herbal infusions according to how we want the cup of tea to benefit us [6]. The following are some of the different types of herbal teas and their benefits:

- Green tea is one of the healthiest herbal teas to drink. It offers a whole lot of goodness such as: helping in prevention of certain types of cancers, fighting tooth decay and gum diseases, aids in weight loss, and so on. Green tea is also available in ‘matcha’ form, which is the ground up form of green tea leaves. Drinking of green ‘matcha’ tea, is actually the consumption of whole tea leaf as it is ground up into a fine powder giving the person drinking it a whole list of good tea side effects .
- Bit of nettle and dandelion is added to a peppermint-red raspberry leaf tea if you want to up your milk production while breastfeeding [7].
- Black tea which is very low in its sodium, fat and calorie content, is known to be bountiful in antioxidants. It also helps cure Parkinson’s disease and cardiovascular problems.
- Oolong tea, a famous Asian tea is known to cure Type 2 Diabetes when consumed on a daily basis. Further, it also helps in weight loss when taken regularly.
- Another good tea to drink is yerba mate tea. Yerba mate good tea side effects include: reducing the risk of certain cancers and heart disease. It is full of vitamin A, B1, B2, C, and the minerals magnesium, potassium, calcium, iron, and riboflavin that many adults lack in their daily diets [8].

- Chamomile is one of the most common herbal teas people drink. It has a mild sedative effect, so it’s perfect to use as a sleep aid. It also soothes stomach pains and acts as a gentle laxative. It helps alleviate menstrual cramps: research indicates that chamomile raises levels of glycine, a substance that calms muscle spasms [9].
- Red raspberry leaf tea is good for women who are pregnant or trying to conceive. It’s said to reduce labour pains. It tones the uterus and pelvic muscles, but does not stimulate contractions, so it won’t induce labour or miscarriage.
- Astragalus tea is known to cure HIV and AIDS [10].
- Ginger tea is also good for nausea of any kind, from morning sickness to motion sickness and anything in between.
- Cardamom tea helps treat indigestion, prevents stomach pain, and relieves flatulence. It’s also helpful to drink a glass of cardamom tea if you are feeling nauseous. Cardamom tea fights pulmonary disease where lots of phlegm is present. It also works to relieve coughs. Drinking a cup of cardamom tea is helpful for women who experience mood swings during their menstrual period.
- Ginger is an energizer and a stimulator. Drinking ginger tea both stimulates and soothes the digestive system. Ginger has been known to aid people experiencing nausea. Arthritic people have found ginger tea helpful since it has anti-inflammatory properties.
- Peppermint tea is good to treat an upset stomach, especially when it’s combined with chamomile [11].
- Herbal teas are generally known to cause soothing to the stomach and lower blood pressure and chances of cancer [12].

DISADVANTAGES:

Some of the disadvantages of consuming certain herbal teas are as follows:

- Some of these teas are prone to contain potential toxic chemicals like dyes, adhesive, flavour enhancers, either from their area of growth or during manufacture [13].

Effects of green tea are as follows:

- Even though quite unusual and rare, allergic reactions due to consumption of green tea are possible. Some of them include difficulty in breathing and other respiratory or throat affecting issues; swelling around lips, tongue or face. In such cases, one should stop the consumption of green tea and seek emergency medical care [14].
- Consumption of green tea for extremely long periods of time (in heavy quantities), have also proven to be connected with oesophageal cancer.
- Green tea are known to also cause other less serious side effects (although rarely), such as:
 1. Heartburn
 2. upset stomach
 3. loss of appetite
 4. constipation or diarrhoea

5. nervousness, irritability, or anxiety
6. sleeplessness
7. irregular heartbeats
8. headache .

Such cases must be reported to the doctor at once, to check for further discomfort of the patient [15].

Black tea is often a source of caffeine, hence, causes the following reactions:

- Caffeine being a stimulant of the central nervous system, sometimes causes insomnia in adults, children, and infants. It also acts on the kidneys as a diuretic (increasing urine and urine sodium/potassium levels, and potentially decreasing blood sodium/potassium levels), and may deteriorate urge incontinence. Black tea, although not much, but its due to its presence of slight levels of caffeine, can (very rarely) cause these conditions when consumed.
- It is known to cause erosion of the dental enamel if taken continuously [16].
- According to , ‘an increase in blood sugar levels may occur after drinking black tea containing the equivalent of 200 milligrams of caffeine (4 to 5 cups, depending on tea strength and cup size). Caffeine-containing beverages such as black tea should be used cautiously in patients with diabetes.’
- Animal study reports that tannin fractions from tea plants may increase the risk of cancer, although it is not clear that the tannin present in black tea has significant carcinogenic effects in humans [17].

SIDE EFFECTS OF CHAMOMILE TEA:

- A person suffering from allergic reactions to plants of the Composite family (a large group including such flowers as daisies, ragweed, asters and chrysanthemums), one should be cautious about using chamomile. While there have been isolated reports of allergies caused such as, skin rashes and bronchial constriction; most people can use this herb with no problem.
- Pregnant individuals are advised not to consume chamomile tea as it can stimulate uterine contractions. Also, chamomile has a blood-thinning effect, so if one is already taking blood thinners, they are advised not to drink this tea [18].

Other types of tea:

- Sassafras tea contains close to about 80% of a toxic compound called safrole. Studies have revealed that large amounts of safrole intake can increase the risk of liver toxicity. If one is pregnant or breastfeeding, it is advised not to consume sassafras tea. Consumption of the sassafras tea by healthy non-pregnant individuals should be used sparingly [19].
- Recent studies reveal that peppermint tea might lower testosterone, especially for men and affect fertility [20].

Also, it may be noted that not all herbal teas pose risks on consumption. Some of them do, that too very mildly and rarely, which are explained above.



Image 3: Chamomile tea with the plant

CONCLUSION:

From this article, it can be concluded that scientific evidence of the health and medical effects of herbal tea on consumption provides digestion, mind relaxation and prevention of cancer, amongst its other benefits. Although, there is no clear-cut evidence for the effects of its consumption, it is still believed that an overdose of herbal tea may cause slight and rare medical issues. However, before the consumption of herbal teas or its ingredients, it is advisable to talk to a professional who is knowledgeable about tea and its side effects, good and bad. Also, one can always do his/ her own research if in doubt too [20]. In the meantime, an increase in the consumption of tea, with a negligible calorie load, should be encouraged.

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