

What Can Your Morning Brew Do For You?

The Benefits of Coffee and Tea

Confession: I love coffee. Those of you who know me know that I'm a java junkie. Hot, cold, two days old. Weak, strong, all day long. You get the point. I love it all: fully-lead, half-caff and even decaf. Yes, even decaf. Some might ask what the point is in drinking decaffeinated coffee. Being a little high-strung by nature, too much caffeine in me seems to irritate the people around me. I don't really understand it, but my drinking decaf seems to help ease their moody behaviors.

My sister introduced me to coffee when I was in college. We sat down to a hot cup of rich, soothing, chocolate colored goodness together and from that day a special bond was formed. A dual bond with my older sister and with my dear cup of joe. My coffee and I, we have become inseparable. There is nothing that the two of us can not accomplish together. A very wise person once said that "with enough coffee anything is possible." Agreed!

Coffee consumption has been around since the middle of the 15th century, first used in religious ceremonies in Yemen. Later spreading worldwide, the first European coffee house opened in Rome in 1645 followed by the first American coffeehouse in Boston in 1676 (3). More than fifty countries around the world now grow coffee beans. Each individual coffee bean's taste is unique as it is affected by factors such as location, weather, altitude, plant and soil type (4).

It turns out that I'm accompanied by many other morning mud maniacs out there; according to stattiscibrain.com, over 54% of Americans over the age of 18 drink coffee every day with a total of \$18 billion spent in total on coffee annually. While 35% prefer their coffee black as mud, 65% prefer it sweetened with cream or sugar (1).

Tea, on the other hand, is almost the most widely consumed beverage in the world, right behind water. Tea originated in China and it has been long promoted for having health benefits. Though there are several kinds of tea, purists consider only five kinds of tea as "real" tea: green tea, black tea, white tea, oolong tea and pu-erh tea (5).

Just one cup of tea or coffee can provide an array of benefits for the body and mind. Let's start off with a cup of tea, shall we?

How Good Can EGCG Be?

Tea contains powerful antioxidants, called flavonoids, with the most potent being EGCG. EGCG helps protect against free radicals. What are free radicals? Though they might sound like a trendy new-age music group, free radicals are actually molecules that contribute to age-related conditions and other illnesses such as cancer, heart disease and clogged arteries (8). Other potential benefits in the varieties of tea through several studies have found :

- * Green Tea: Green tea has a high concentration of EGCG. Green tea may help hinder the growth of breast, bladder, lung, stomach, pancreatic and colorectal cancer. It may also prevent clogging of the arteries, burn fat, reduce risk of stroke, improve cholesterol levels and reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease and the risk of Parkinson's disease (6).

- * Black Tea: Black tea has a higher level of caffeine content than any of the other teas. Studies have shown that black tea may decrease the risk of stroke. Black tea may also protect lungs, particularly from damage caused by cigarette smoke exposure (6).

- * White Tea: Studies have shown that white tea has the most potent anticancer properties (6).

- * Oolong Tea: This tea was shown to have cholesterol lowering benefits in one study. (6)

- * Pu-erh Tea: A black tea made from fermented and aged leaves, a study showed this tea to also have cholesterol lowering benefit (6).

Do You Know What's in Your Cup of Joe?

Your cup of coffee is chock full of antioxidants. That cup of coffee contains the minerals magnesium and chromium, which are known to help the body use glucose, the insulin that controls blood sugar (2). Your brew also contains vitamins B12 & B5, potassium and niacin (7), helping you stay energized and maintaining electrolyte functions. Decaffeinated and caffeinated coffee have both been shown in studies to have various benefits: aiding in prevention of Type 2 Diabetes, lowering the risk of stroke, decreasing the risk of Parkinson's disease and decreasing the risk of Alzheimer's disease (2), lowering the risks of cirrhosis, premature death,

