

Exploring the health benefits of tea



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Japan – the country with the world's longest life expectancy. Based on Paul Wiseman, journalist from USA TODAY reported that Japanese live longer life compared to everyone else in the world (par. 1). Frank Jordans, journalist of The Huffington Post also states that Japanese girls that are born in the year 2009 have a high chance of living to the year 2095, some may even stand the chance to explore the wonders of the next century (par. 1). Have you ever question the reason why Japanese carries the title of the world's longest life expectancy? One of the reason is Japanese consume tea, in large quantity. Many countries across the globe believed in the health benefits of drinking tea peculiarly China, Japan, India and even England. Tea, commonly known as the nature's " wonder drug" should be continuously explored by the general public to increase health awareness (Tea Benefits).

The nature's " wonder drug" – tea, plays an important role in varies countries around the world which includes the formation of cultural ceremonies, trade routes, formal events, entertainment, and leisure for almost 4000 years. Tea is important not just solely due to the taste but also the health benefits that are tied along this ancient drink. Hence, people should include tea into their daily routine and experience the revitalizing benefits of tea (Walker).

Tea has numerous health benefits that could be grouped into 5 different categories: overall health care, mental health, internal organ, fitness & appearance, and illness & disease.

Tea contains chemicals known as polyphenols that provides antioxidant properties of tea. Antioxidant reduces the rate of aging process and improves regeneration of cells (Bell). It is true that coffee also contains

antioxidant properties that have similar effect towards our human body, but, coffee contains much more caffeine as compared to tea that contributes towards a negative effect on human. For every ounces of green tea, it contains 3. 1mg of caffeine while every ounce of a Starbucks Tall Coffee contains 21. 7mg of caffeine (“ Energy Fiend”). In this case, the caffeine level in coffee is 7 times stronger compared to tea. Just like any drugs, caffeine causes a chemical reaction that creates addiction towards the brain that will cause withdrawal symptoms when caffeine is not taken. When temporary stimulation is not given, brain cells will start demand for caffeine for stimulation. Deprivation of caffeine might even result in severe conditions like depression or other mental problem (Johnson). In addition, tea helps to keep body hydrated. Most caffeinated drinks actually dehydrate body fluid unless more than five to six cups are consumed at a time but tea has the opposite reaction. Tea is shown to be healthier than water as it keeps body hydrated in the same time providing antioxidants and a moderate amount of caffeine that is suitable for body intake (Walker).

Many researches also show that tea provides a positive impact towards the brain and improve mental state of a person. Tea contains amino acid L-theanine that is scientifically proven to improve relaxation and concentration (Walker). I understand that many people like to drink coffee as it provides similar effects, some may even argue that coffee is better than tea as it provide instantaneous and stronger boost towards the brain as it contains a much higher level of caffeine. However, when high dosage of caffeine is consumed to provide the mental stimulant, it will lead to depression, mood swing and nervousness in the long run (Rodolfo). Tea also decreases the

probability of having cognitive impairment, which affects the ability to think, reason, formulate ideas, and remember. Research shows that Japanese adults who drink at least 2 cups of green tea daily decrease the risk of cognitive impairment by 50%. Stress is unavoidable across age, gender, nationality and culture. Cortisol, a stress hormone shows a 20% drop as a result of drinking 4 cups of tea daily for one month. This evidently proves that tea have the effect of reduce stress hormone level (Walker).

Long term consumption of coffee in a daily basis will also disturb a person's sleeping pattern. Coffee, a beverage with high level of caffeine is a chemical stimulant that will stimulate our brain to be awake for a longer time period than normal people. This also means that people that consume coffee actually have a shorter sleeping period, and the quality sleep is highly affected. As caffeine is an addictive chemical, it will affect sleeping pattern of a person, and possibly causes insomnia or other sleeping problems, creating feeling of restlessness, tremors, and etc. The level of negative effects varies accordingly based on the consumption period, and consumption quantity (Johnson).

Japan to be title the world's longest life expectancy is mainly due to the fact that tea has many beneficial effects related to our internal organ, mainly our heart. Firstly, tea reduces the risk of heart attack and stroke as it prevents dangerous blood clots which is the main cause of heart attack and stroke. The Boston Area Health Study recorded a 44% lower risk when a person consume at least one cup of tea daily compared to a person that doesn't drink tea (McKay, and Blumberg 3). Not just in Boston, " In a long-term study of a Dutch cohort, the highest tertile of tea consumption was associated with

a lower risk of death from coronary heart disease and lower incidence of stroke” (Yang, and Landau 2410). A reader might ask, is coffee good for our heart as well? Joseph A. Vita from Evans Department of Medicine and Whitaker Cardiovascular Institute, Boston University School of Medicine states that “ There was no significant relationship between coffee consumption and cardiovascular disease” (32935). Hence, this proves that there is no significant positive correlation between coffees as compared with the nature’s wonder drug – tea.

On the other hand, tea helps lessen blood pressure level in the body and decrease risk of hypertension. Drinking half a cup of green tea daily could reduce blood pressure risk by up to half and it has a directly proportional relationship between tea consumption and reduction of blood pressure risk. The more tea is consumed daily, the further reduction of blood pressure risk. A research was held in Taiwan with 1507 subjects to test the long term effect of tea upon hypertension and it was concluded that consumption of more than 120ml or more per day for one year significantly decrease the risk of hypertension in the Chinese population (Yi-Ching Yang et al. 1534). Using this research as the fundamental base of argument, consumption of tea in a large quantity will further provide benefits towards our heart, hence, tea should be included into our daily routine.

Tea’s benefits are not just limited to our heart and blood pressure, it also proven to improve our digestive system. For the past 5000 years, tea has been widely used in China as an after-meal drink to aid digestion as it contains high level of tannins. Other than that, polyphenols in green tea presented an effect that helps intestinal inflammation while antispasmodic

agent available in the properties of red tea helps to relief stomach cramp (Walker). On the other hand, using coffee as a comparison, drinking coffee with an empty stomach will harm our internal body which will leads to ulcer growth in the long run (Rodolfo).

As a people slowly include tea into their daily routine, they will discover tea can not only improve mentally – brain, physically – internal organs but also providing effects on a person's fitness and appearance as well. Most people does not know that tea contains tannins and fluoride, substance that is contain in regular toothpaste, in which both reduce oral tooth decay and plaque. University of Chicago proposed polyphenols that is contain in tea aids bad breath. Hence, tea provides a platform for oral care that includes healthier teeth and breath issues that is suffered by people. Antioxidant in green tea also take place in acne problems, it was shown to be functioning the same as 4% benzoyl peroxide which is mainly used in acne treatment, bleaching teeth and hair and improving flour (Walker). Hence, why not get acne-free skin from natural antioxidant by drinking tea?

A cup of tea with its full aroma has no calories unless sweeteners, sugar or milk is added. This beverage is one of the healthiest low calorie drinks that provide the morning boost without worrying of gaining weight (Walker). It is true that coffee itself is also calorie free, but, most coffee drinkers have the habit of adding sugar, creamer, sweeter or milk into their coffee compared to tea drinkers, using the research held in Taiwan, out of 1507 subjects, only 4.8% have the habit of adding milk into their beverage – tea (Yi-Ching Yang et al. 1537). It was also found out by the department of chemical biology of the State University of New Jersey that feeding oolong tea to diet-induced obese

mice for 10 weeks prevented obesity and fatty liver (Yang, and Landau 2411). In addition, consumption of coffee (caffeine) in large quantity at once will also disrupt sugar level in blood that could affect fat burning to change into storing fat which will cause it weight gain and other negative effects towards out body (Wash).

Since tea has so many benefits towards our health in regards of mentally nor physically, does tea have any positive implication towards illness and disease as well? The answer is YES. Tea contributes towards strengthening of our body immune defenses system. A study was held among tea drinkers and coffee drinkers to compare immune activity within the body and it was found that immunity activity was up to five times higher in tea drinkers. Hence, practice the habit of drinking tea especially when there are people around you not feeling too well as it could help to prevent germs or virus entering your body. As tea increase our immunity system, tea also aids fighting flu as participants who gargle black tea extract solution twice a day was found to be more immune to flu virus (Walker). Instead of taking flu shots, why not just try the magical effect of tea?

Besides, tea contains alkylamine antigens, which is an organic compound similar function as some bacteria and tumor cells to boost immunity. Evidence shown that tea even has effect on serious infections like sepsis, a severe bacterial infection in body tissue or blood stream. Likewise, tea also has effect in preventing food poisoning. Bacteria which lead to food poisoning are killed and toxins effects are minimize through a substance known as catechin, a bitter ingredient in green tea. With the combination of catechin and polysaccharides, it was also found to have an effect on lowering

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blood sugar, which will also, leads to diabetes prevention in the long run (Walker). It is true that coffee prevents type 2 diabetes, it is a beverage that naturally contains sugar that are sugar friendly to our blood, if no additional substance (sugar, creamer, syrup, and etc.) are added, it is no doubt coffee is beneficial for controlling sugar level when consumed in small quantity.

Based on the World Health Organization statistics, cancer – the leading cause of death with 13% worldwide, accounted for 7.9 million people in 2007. The bad news is that deaths caused by cancer are projected with an uphill slope of up to 12 million deaths in 2030. The good news is, about 30% of the death caused by cancer can be prevented (Cancer). Tea, offers a gateway toward the prevention of cancer. Many experiments and research are held to question the relationship between tea and prevention of cancer development. Studies held in Asia among 8552 Japanese adults for nine years, all subjects consume at least 10 cups of green daily are found to be having the effect of delaying cancer onset. The protective effect differs according with gender – females by 8.7 years while male by three years when compared to subjects consume less than 3 cups a day. On the contrary, the delay effect of cancer was found to be less significant in Europe populations who generally consume black tea. Therefore it is important to understand the effects of different tea on our body as well as the effect of tea also differ on type of cancer (McKay, and Blumberg 6).

For instance, no relation was found between tea and breast cancer in recent studies in United States, Netherlands and Italy. Conversely, 472 Japanese patient with stage I and II breast cancer recorded an inverse relationship between green tea consumption period and recurrence rate after seven

years. Green tea contains substances that able modifies sex hormones that have major relationship with the risk of breast cancer reoccurrence (McKay, and Blumberg 6). Another study that was held in Iowa in regards of postmenopausal woman, it was shown that there are lower risk for urinary tract cancer and digestive tract cancer when black tea is consumed (Yang, Landau 2411). Besides that, in Netherlands, 120852 people were observed to have a weak, inverse association with consumption of black tea and stomach cancer. However, in Poland, a significant result of stomach cancer reduction is found in woman who drank tea daily. Although the effect does not occur to men, it is important to take note that growth of stomach cancer cells are inhibited through theaflavins, a substance contain in black tea (McKay, and Blumberg 6). The most important point is to acknowledge the different tea has its own unique chemical substances and effects towards human body in the same time understanding that there is no “ one tea fit all” concept. The effects of tea vary accordingly and it is high affected by lifestyle, eating habit, geographical, population and climate of an individual. A careful in dept study should be held in each nation to understand the chemical properties of tea in associate with lifestyle from that area itself to obtain its greatest potential benefits.

In the nut shell, tea has a vast variety of benefits which includes taking care of our overall health care and mental health, protecting our internal organs, in the same time provides a better fitness and appearance. It also provides preventive measures for illness and disease. Hence, the next time anyone asks the question, “ Hello, would you like coffee or tea?” Please reply, “ I would like TEA.”