

## Healing Power of **TEA**

Hot or cold, green or black, this ancient beverage is steeped in health benefits

**“W**HAT WOULD the world do without tea?” the writer Sydney Smith asked over 150 years ago.

It's no idle question. Tea is the world's most popular beverage, after water. And it provides protection against several health threats.

**Heart Helper** In a 2002 Dutch study of 4,807 people, those who drank at least 13 ounces daily had half the heart attack risk of non-tea drinkers. In 2002, researchers in Boston found that heart patients who drank two or more cups daily were 44% less likely to die over the next four years.

A U.S. study last year showed that tea can lower bad cholesterol levels by an average of 10%. In cases where dangerous cholesterol has already stuck to artery walls, flavonoids, the antioxidants in tea, are thought to prevent it from damaging the inner lining.

**Cancer Fighter** In Japan, a 1998 investigation found that drinking ten or more cups of green tea every day delayed the onset of cancer by almost nine years in women and about three in men. And a Canadian study from 1998 suggests another benefit for guys: Men who drank three cups a day were 30% less likely to develop prostate cancer.

**Bone Builder** Flavonoids in tea seem to protect bones. Tea also contains fluoride and substances that stop bacteria from sticking to teeth, which together help fight cavities.

Green and black tea are probably equally protective, says Jeffrey Blumberg, a nutrition researcher at Tufts University. Even iced tea is beneficial, though it's usually more



diluted. Since flavonoids break down over time, making your own tea is better than buying bottled. If caffeine keeps you up, try decaf—it has only 10% to 15% fewer flavonoids. (The health benefits of herbal teas are not well established.) “If you don't drink tea now, brewing just one cup a day is likely to keep you healthier,” says Blumberg. “Drinking four cups is probably even better. I love tea, so I say drink as much as you like.”

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189

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