

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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April 27, 2007

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Green Tea and Cancer - Connected?

To read some of the advertising for green tea flavored drinks these days, you might think that it's the great cancer cure we've all been waiting for. Cure your ills with a can of tea! How great! Buy a bottle of tea extract for your skin. Wonderful! While there is some real basis for the hopes, we are not there yet. For example, to get as much of one of the antioxidants as was fed to the lab animals, we would need at least 10 cups of green tea a day, maybe more.

Is that much going to hurt you? Not likely. But if you trade several cups of green tea for the same amount of sugary sodas, that will be a benefit. If you take the time to sit down, relax, put your feet up and sip a couple cups of tea a day, the lowered stress levels will almost certainly help your blood pressure. So what about the cancers?

There are several chemicals in green tea that mostly go by their initials - EC, EGC, ECG and ECGC. There are more of these in green tea than in black because fermenting tea leaves to blacken them destroys some of them. They are all antioxidants. That means that one thing they do is to stop or slow down inflammation.

Some inflammation looks like an infected cut or sore. That is red swollen soreness is inflammation. But a lot of it is not that visible. Inflammation in the linings of our arteries can damage them, so that cholesterol starts to stick. But inflammation in other cells seems to encourage cancers to start. The antioxidants in green tea stop that process. They also seem to send signals that tell cancer cells to die off. They don't allow cancer cells to make new arteries. If a cancer tumor can't get an artery to

carry food to it, it won't grow as fast, and may even die.

A few studies hint that green tea might be able to reduce the risk of lung cancer in smokers. Green tea extracts slow or stop the growth of breast cancer cells. They stopped the growth of arteries to new prostate cancer cells.

Besides these effects of its own, green tea seems to make other cancer drugs more effective. Tamoxifen, the drug for breast cancers, works better when combined with green tea extracts. Several other cancer medications also are affected positively.

So, why aren't all our doctors prescribing green tea extracts to prevent or cure these cancers? Because all of these effects have occurred in mice, rats, test tubes or petri dishes. So far none of it has been proven to work in people.

There are big studies of whole groups of people in China that do show a slightly lower risk. Asian countries generally have lower rates of breast and prostate cancer. Women who drink green tea have slightly higher survival rates from ovarian cancer. However it is hard to say that drinking green tea would work here, where we eat such a different diet, do so little exercise, have a very different genetic background and such a different lifestyle. There are too many differences to say that the effects came from the green tea. Another suggestion is that to get the benefits of tea we need to be drinking it almost daily most of our lives, not just starting in middle age.

Finally, there is the question of how much. For some people, 10 cups of green tea a day would not be a problem. For others, it could be torture. Some people always want to take a pill, an extract, a concentrate, to get it all in one dose. But we don't absorb those ECGC's very well, so one big dose a day probably won't work very well. And no one is sure if there aren't other active ingredients in tea that haven't yet been identified that are also important.

So, will a couple cups of green tea a day prevent or cure cancer? Not likely, not yet at least. Will they hurt you? Not at all. Will a can of green tea beverage help? Not likely, since there's usually so little tea in them anyway. So, make a cup of green tea, sit down, lift your feet, relax, enjoy our beautiful weather and sip. You'll feel much better, and that will help too.

If you're not much of a tea lover yet but want to give it a try, start with a fruit and lemonade tea. This is just a good served warm as cold, so relax and enjoy it.

Warm Fruit and Lemonade Tea

4 cups water	1/4 teaspoon whole cloves
1 stick cinnamon	4 tea bags
1/4 cup sugar or sweetener equivalent	1/4 cup orange juice
1/4 cup pineapple juice	3 Tbsp lemon juice (fresh is best)

Put cloves and cinnamon in water and bring to boil. Remove from heat, add tea bags. Allow to brew for 5 minutes. Stir and strain to remove spices and tea bags. Add sugar or sweetener and stir to dissolve. Add fruit juices. Serve warm, or chill and reheat cup by cup to enjoy later.

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