

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Summertime is Tea Time

Just in case you haven't noticed, it's hot outside! This time of year, anything to help us cool down feels wonderful. But before you reach for the next bottle of soda, take a detour for a tall glass of iced tea. Or if you prefer, make it a mug of hot tea. Some people feel cooler by drinking hot. Either way, get some tea.

Why push tea, instead of something fruity like lemonade? Sure, lemonade probably has some vitamin C for you. But the research just keeps finding more and more reasons why we should be drinking tea to help our brains. Here are some of the newest findings.

Several doctors gave volunteers green tea before or while they were doing tasks or playing games that required good memory. They had to remember, reason and learn something from their tasks. The ones who drank the green tea did better than the ones who were given a different drink. And, the ones who got the larger doses of green tea did better than those with smaller doses.

Another set of studies looked directly at brain cells, not how well they were working. Normally as we age our brains stop making new cells. The fewer new cells we have, the harder it becomes to change or adapt to changes. If anyone is living in a world that is not changing, you are not living here! But the doctors found that extracts from green tea speeded up the production of new brain cells in mice that were old enough they had stopped making them. Getting the brain to make new cells is great! It could be a fantastic help for people who suffer brain injuries.

For the rest of us, it means we could keep functioning better at older ages. The old mice in the study were tested on how well they could find their ways through mazes. The ones who got the tea extract did much better than those without it. If you've ever gotten lost on the way home, have some tea!

The last reports were studying Alzheimer's disease and the sticky deformed proteins we get in our brains when we get Alzheimer's. One tried to stop the proteins from sticking together in balls they

way they do in brains. The other tried to break the lumps of proteins apart after they had formed.

Both of them found that green tea extracts worked! The first one found that adding green tea to tubes of brain cells with the sticky proteins kept the proteins from sticking to the brain cells. If they can't stick then they don't damage the nerves. The other found that even after the proteins stuck together, green tea extract could make them fall apart again. Either way, it's a healthier brain.

So what happens if you don't like to drink green tea? Both green and white tea, made from the tenderest tips of the tea plant, have the most active compounds. Black tea has been fermented and sometimes smoked to dry it. It has the least. Oolong tea has been dried but not fermented, and it's in the middle. But if you won't drink green, don't worry. Drink black tea. Bacteria in our intestines can use what's in black tea and change it back into the green tea chemicals.

Herbal teas and roibos tea are made from different plants, and don't have the same compounds. And most of the bottled tea and fruit or tea and energy drink mixtures have so little tea they're barely effective. They're okay if you can't get any real tea, certainly better than soda. But with ready-made jugs of tea, all ready chilled, waiting for you in the grocery, there's no excuse to not have a tea party this summer!

Here are two variations on plain old tea, one made with black tea, the other with green. The black tea is probably better served hot. The green tea would be delicious cold too. Take your pick.

Five-Spice Tea

4 regular tea bags 4 cups cold water 2 Tbsp sugar

¼ tsp five-spice powder (look in the Asian section of the grocery store)

Bring water to a boil. Put teabags and spice powder in teapot or pitcher. Add boiling water and allow to sit 5 minutes. Remove tea bags and stir in sugar. Serves 4-6.

Ginger-Honey Tea

4 green tea bags 4 cups cold water 2 Tbsp honey

1 tsp grated ginger root

Bring water to boil. Put teabags and ginger root in teapot or pitcher. Add boiling water and allow to sit 5 minutes. Strain out ginger root. Stir in honey. Serves 4-6.

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