Tea - Steeped in Health Benefits

Tea is the most widely consumed beverage in the world. With more than 3,000 variations, it can be daunting for novice drinkers to know where to start. However, with the current research about tea and its many health benefits for those who sip it regularly, it is worth exploring the perks of this popular potable.

A Rainbow of Choices

While there are thousands of variations of tea, they all come from one source (with the exception of herbal teas) — the camellia sinensis. This evergreen is native to China and Southeast Asia but is grown in tropical or subtropical regions throughout the world. The plant gives way to the six basic categories of tea: white, green, oolong, black, pu-erh and flavored. The different tastes come from the fermentation processes the leaves undergo.

Health Benefits Are in the Bag

Much has been documented about the health benefits of tea. Tea has less caffeine than coffee, is calorie-free and full of antioxidants, which protect the body from aging. Tea can help lower cholesterol, blood pressure, aid digestion and inhibit intestinal inflammation. Tea also boosts your immune defenses and may reduce your risk of a heart attack and stroke, even some forms of cancer. According to researchers, tea also protects bones because of its phytochemicals. Green tea has been shown to increase metabolism.

Best Brew

Even the most sophisticated tea connoisseurs will tell you, you just need two things to make a good cup of tea — water and tea. Filtered water is preferred and the right temperature is important. For black tea, and oolongs and pu-erh, water should be near boiling. For green and white teas, opt for water that has dropped to about 180 degrees. Also, the fresher and more seasonal the tea, the better it will be for you.

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