

NUTRITION NUGGET # 7

Are the health benefits of either tea or milk cancelled out by drinking them together?

Answer: Research shows that drinking milk and tea together does affect the health benefits of each other. To avoid adverse effects, consume them separately.



Facts:

- Tea contains polyphenols, and antioxidants which may prevent abnormal cell growth, reduce inflammation, and protect our cells from free radical damage.
- Herbal teas have flavonoids, chemical compounds known for the antioxidant activity. Consuming a diet rich in flavonoids can lower the risk of heart disease and the risk for some cancers.
- Adding milk or sugar, may cause herbal tea to lose some of its health value. Adding sugar changes tea from a calorie-free, flavonoid-rich beverage to a sugary drink that if consumed in excess of your calorie needs, may lead to obesity in the long run.
- Fat contained in milk can lower the antioxidant power of tea. Flavonoids in tea try to prevent the oxidation of fat in milk. More flavonoids interacting with the milk fat means fewer available to help in the body. So choose skim milk or low fat milk.
- Tea also contains oxalates, which may bind with minerals in milk, lowering the amounts of minerals that can be absorbed.

Apply: A participant tells you they get their dairy needs daily from drinking milk in their tea and coffee. What would you tell this participant?

References: Tufts Journal: Tea Time is Healthy Time, http://tuftsjournal.tufts.edu/2008/12_1/briefs/01/; SelfNutritionData: Nutrition Facts and Analysis for Milk, nonfat, fluid, without added vitamin A (fat free or skim), <http://nutritiondata.self.com/facts/dairy-and-egg-products/139/2>. Hof KH, Kivits GA, Weststrate JA, Tijburg LB. Bioavailability of catechins from tea: The effect of milk. European Journal of Clinical Nutrition. 1998; 52 (5): 356-359. MedlinePlus. Green tea: MedlinePlus Supplements. <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/960.html>; MedlinePlus. Black tea: MedlinePlus Supplements. <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/natural/997.html>; Savage GP, Charrier MJS, Vanhanen L. Bioavailability of soluble oxalate from tea and the effect of consuming milk with the tea. European Journal of Clinical Nutrition. 2003; 57:415-419. Images: Tea, <http://tabright.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/04/tea-cup-white.jpg>; Milk and carton, <http://www.harfordcountyhealth.com/WebImages/milk.jpg>; tea bag, http://tuftsjournal.tufts.edu/2008/12_1/briefs/01/.