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Drinking Your Phytonutrients: Tea of Any Color

Summer is here and with it, iced tea seems to be a staple drink. It gave me the idea to do a series on the phytonutrients we can get from our beverages. Getting people to eat vegetables can take some time, but everyone wants a cool drink in the summer and hot drink in the winter. This week is all about tea, coffee, and the latest research on both.

Let's begin with tea from the leaves of *Camellia sinensis*. Based on world-wide statistics, black tea is consumed by 72% of the population while 36% drink green tea. Obviously some people, including me, drink both types on a regular basis. If there a difference in the phytonutrients between the two? Yes, as the drying process modifies the types of phytonutrients in each.

The primary type of phytonutrient in green tea is catechins although there are many others. Regular consumption of green tea in population studies has been associated with lower incidence of heart disease and cancer as well as other benefits.



There are two primary phytonutrients in black tea called theaflavins and thearubigins. Both of these phytonutrients have been studied for their beneficial effects on mitochondria, which is "the powerhouse of the cell," the nitric oxide system, and cancer prevention.

Without knowing anything else, it seems like a great idea to start drinking tea right now. On Thursday, I'll cover the phytonutrients in coffee, my personal favorite.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

P.S. The photo of a *Camellia sinensis* blossom is one of ours, taken on a tour of America's only large tea plantation, [Charleston Tea Plantation](#), on Wadmalaw Island, South Carolina. You can see the whole process, from plants in the field to tea in packages, and then buy some in the store, and it's exceptional tea. We recommend a visit if you're ever in the Lowcountry.

Reference: Health Behavior and Policy Review. 2015; 2(1):62-73.

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