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Drinking Your Phytonutrients: The Bottom Line

To finish this series, I'll briefly cover two recent research studies on coffee and tea, and then give you the bottom line and a recipe.

Research

Green Tea and Neuronal Mitochondria

The mitochondria are the powerhouses of the cells, and that includes brain cells. When they operate at peak activity, they provide our brains with the energy for learning and memory. The downside is that they produce many free radicals in the process, and if we don't have antioxidants to quench those free radicals, it can cause a decline in mental function. Researchers have recently reviewed the benefits of the catechins in green tea (1). Catechins appear to help the mitochondria function well by naturalizing the free radicals the mitochondria make.

Green Coffee and Blood Pressure

Researchers examined the difference between green and black coffee consumption on variables related to heart health, body weight, and several other factors (2). This was a two-week pilot study with 20 subjects to see if there were enough benefits to do a large clinical trial. Those subjects who drank green coffee experienced a decrease in cortisol level with an accompanying decrease in blood pressure. This was a pilot study, so there's a lot more research to be done but it's interesting nonetheless and may change how we view green coffee.

Brewed Drinks or Supplements?

In my opinion, no phytonutrient stands on its own; it's much more important to get everything in food and drinks in the proportions that are found in nature. Even with all the research that's been done, we still don't know if it's really the combinations of nutrients that's beneficial to our health or a single phytonutrient. Just because the individual phytonutrient can be extracted and put into a pill doesn't mean it will convey the same benefits as when consumed in combination with all other nutrients in the plant.

But that doesn't mean I'm opposed to taking some phytonutrients in supplements. Paula and I take a catechin extract because research shows it can help lower cholesterol. I just think that we should lead with food first, then supplements, providing there's enough research to show the benefit—so drink your coffee and tea.



The Bottom Line

There are two things that you need to know. First, you have to drink enough of the phytonutrient drinks frequently during the day. That means every few hours or so to raise and maintain the levels in the body. Second, there's no

free pass when it comes to the rest of your diet. You can countermand the benefits of the phytonutrient-rich drinks by eating a diet high in fats and refined carbohydrates.

Drink your phytonutrients and reap the benefits. Paula loves real Southern sweet tea; that was always an added perk of visiting our kids in South Carolina. So she researched how Southerners really make iced tea to find a sugar-free, decaf blend that tasted most like the real thing. After numerous trials, she hit upon a combination of black and green teas that mimics sweet tea, your choice whether caffeinated or decaffeinated. You can find her recipe [here](#).

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

References:

1. Front Biosci (Landmark Ed). 2015 Jan 1;20:247-62.
2. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1155/2014/482704>

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