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## Tea prevents heart attacks



The traditional British cuppa is good for you

People consuming at least one cup of tea a day reduced their risk of heart attack by almost 50%, a study found.

The American research programme looked at the drinking habits of almost 700 people.

Unfortunately, it also discovered that both regular and decaffeinated coffee appeared to give no benefit whatsoever.

While not the first study to suggest that tea may be a health-giving drink, the latest research adds real weight to earlier claims.

### Tea may neutralise cell damage

The health benefits are thought to be derived from ingredients known as "flavanoids", a type of antioxidant found in all types of tea.

These are thought to neutralise the effect of "free radicals", a highly reactive molecule which travels around the body causing chemical reactions which can damage cells, including those in the heart tissues.

Free radicals have been implicated not only in heart disease, but also in strokes, cancer and aging.

The study looked at the tea and coffee drinking habits of 680 people aged 76 and under, and included one set of heart attack victims, and the same number of healthy volunteers.

The men and women who drank one or more cups of tea a day had a 44% reduction in heart attack risk compared to non tea drinkers.

Previous studies have produced much the same results.

A Dutch investigation of more than 800 men between 65 and 84 showed that drinking even more tea - between three and four cups a day - decreased risk of death from coronary heart disease by 58%.

### Tea research on the up

About 168m cups of "black" tea - ordinary tea as opposed to "green" tea - are consumed in the UK every day.

Green tea is thought to reduce the risk of a drinker developing certain types of cancer.

Dr Paul Quinlan investigates the health properties of tea at a laboratory sponsored by tea firm Brooke Bond.

He said: "In 1991 there were just 153 studies on tea, while in 1998 there were 625 published papers.

"Flavanoids are the new stars of a healthy diet . It's a subject which is exciting the scientific establishment."

A conference on flavanoids is being held on Tuesday at the Royal Society of Medicine in London.

Even coffee, long believed to have no beneficial effects, has been shown to reduce the incidence of gallstones.

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