

Green tea found to reduce disability in the elderly

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Green tea. Credit: Wikimedia Commons

(Medical Xpress) -- A lot of research has been done over the past several years looking into the health benefits of green tea. As a result, scientists have found that regular consumption of the beverage leads to a reduction in several maladies often associated with aging, such as osteoporosis, stroke and cognitive impairment. But until now, according to the authors of a new study on its benefits, no such studies have been undertaken to determine if regular tea drinking provides other benefits, such as a reduction in functional disabilities. Because of this, a research project was undertaken by a team from Tokyo's Graduate School of Medicine, and they have found that older people who drink more green tea tend to have less functional disabilities than do those who don't. They have published their findings in *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

The team describes functional disabilities as those that interfere with living a normal life, such as being able to dress or bathe without assistance, or to perform household chores, or go for a walk. To find out if drinking [green tea](#) regularly helps people ward off such disabilities as they age, the team surveyed 13,998 adults age 65 and over and followed their eating, drinking and health habits over a three year period. They also accessed Japan's Long-term Care Insurance database to help in gathering statistics.

After compiling all the data, the team found that people who drank more of the green tea, tended to have the least number of functional disabilities. Put into numbers, they found that approximately 13% of those tested that drank one cup or less of the tea every day wound up with a functional disability, whereas only 7% of those who drank five cups or more each day became so.

The research team isn't claiming they've found absolute proof that drinking a lot of green tea every day will ward off functional disabilities, but that instead their research suggests that it seems likely. They say that those who drank more green tea every day also tended to live healthier lifestyles, such as eating more fish, fruits and vegetables, staying more active and maintaining a more well-rounded social life that included family. However, they note, even after discounting such factors, those that drank more tea still did better than did those who did not.

Researchers in general aren't really clear about why green tea has health benefits, but suspect it has something to do with a compound in it called EGCG, an antioxidant that appears to ward off cell damage that can lead to disease.

More information: Green tea consumption and the risk of incident functional disability in elderly Japanese: the Ohsaki Cohort 2006 Study, *Am J Clin Nutr*, First published January 25, 2012, doi:

10.3945/ajcn.111.023200

Abstract

Background: Previous studies have reported that green tea consumption is associated with a lower risk of diseases that cause functional disability, such as stroke, cognitive impairment, and osteoporosis. Although it is expected that green tea consumption would lower the risk of incident functional disability, this has never been investigated directly.

Objective: The objective was to determine the association between green tea consumption and incident functional disability in elderly individuals.

Design: We conducted a prospective cohort study in 13,988 Japanese individuals aged ≥ 65 y. Information on daily green tea consumption and other lifestyle factors was collected via questionnaire in 2006. Data on functional disability were retrieved from the public Long-term Care Insurance database, in which subjects were followed up for 3 y. We used Cox proportional hazards regression analysis to investigate the association between green tea consumption and functional disability.

Results: The 3-y incidence of functional disability was 9.4% (1316 cases). The multiple-adjusted HR (95% CI) of incident functional disability was 0.90 (0.77, 1.06) among respondents who consumed 1–2 cups green tea/d, 0.75 (0.64, 0.88) for those who consumed 3–4 cups/d, and 0.67 (0.57, 0.79) for those who consumed ≥ 5 cups/d in comparison with those who consumed

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