

by **Tolulope Obasuyi**

What is tea? Most Nigerians have the misconception of referring to chocolate drinks as tea. It might amuse most people to know that tea is actually a drink made from herbs with the most common from the leaves of a plant called *Camellia sinensis* also known as tea plant. Teas are also made from other plants and fruits, and are collectively referred to as herbal tea.

While herbal teas are not particularly tasty like chocolate drinks, why then should you replace chocolate drinks with them? This article discusses some reasons why you might want to consider a bitter or slightly sweet drink that has been in existence for more than 3000 years over that sweet one you so much prefer



It reduces menstrual pain

Before Felvin, Ibuprofen, and similar drugs used to relieve menstrual pain came into existence, teas whether from *Camellia sinensis* or other plant has been used to relieve menstrual cramps. Chamomile tea for example has been found to have a soothing effect on the body, relaxing nerve cells and reducing muscle spasms. Locally here in Nigeria, making tea from a plant known as *ewe upon* in Yoruba language and palmwine has been said to relieve serious menstrual cramps and any other related stomach ache.

It boosts the immune system

The benefits of having a healthy immune system can not be overemphasized. You are less prone to infections, stress and you feel healthy. Studies have shown that taking tea consistently over a period of time improves the immune system. This is because it contains antioxidants such as flavonoid in black tea, menthol & methyl salicylate in peppermint tea, and gingerol in ginger tea.

Did You Know?

Though both tea and herbal tea originated from China, the de facto national beverage of Russia is tea.

It makes you look younger

An African singer once sang that 'If you call an African woman a woman, she would not agree but say she is a baby'. This shows that while the majority of us would love to grow old, we do not want to look old. Taking of tea and herbal tea consistently revitalizes the skin and makes one look younger. This is because they are rich in antioxidants that get rid of radicals like reactive oxygen species (ROS) which cause hyperpigmentation and wrinkles. Also, since the ultraviolet rays from the sun enhance the generation of these radicals, you might want to consider taking tea or herbal tea to reduce the effect of aging it might cause.

It reduces the risk of heart problem

According to Dr Akinroye Kingsley, more than 76 million Nigerians have high blood pressure out of an average population of 200 million. To make it worse, only half of these people are

aware that they are hypertensive earning the disease the name 'silent killer'. However, studies have shown that consuming about 2 cups of tea daily reduces the risk of cardiovascular diseases due to the flavonoids in them.

It may prevent cancer

It is quite interesting to know that after heart disease, cancer is the second leading cause of death. Polyphenols found in tea and herbal tea are able to inhibit the rapid growth of cancer cells. Other compounds found in teas too such as catechins which hinders the growth of new blood vessels that cancer cells require to grow. Though patients treating cancer may have to consult their doctors if they should take tea and herbal tea, an individual can reduce the risk of cancer by taking it earlier.

Conclusion

Tea and herbal tea has been around since ages and even after science brought synthetic drugs which indicates that they must be of importance. As the second most consumed drink in the world after water, they contain various antioxidants which has brought about their effectiveness in reducing the risk of major illnesses in the world.

If you are thinking of knowing the medicinal contents of your plants and regular teas that can be used as alternative to Western medicine, click [**here**](#).

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