The Calming Effect of Green Tea on Anxiety

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Green Tea and Anxiety: Can Green Tea Help Anxiety?

Chinese medicine has long used green tea to treat depression, but research finds that it's also helpful in managing anxiety. This is because green tea contains L-theanine, an amino acid known for reducing stress and relaxing the body and mind.

Benefits of L-theanine

L-theanine supplements are praised for their ability to improve sleep, reduce stress, promote relaxation, and boost concentration. This amino acid is found in green and black teas, which is why these teas impact your mood.

The belief is when you consume green or black tea, neurotransmitters in the brain respond with a calming effect. The L-theanine in tea also counters the stimulating action of caffeine, but still promotes concentration and an alert calmness.

Because of the effects of green tea, L-theanine has been made available as a dietary supplement to promote stress reduction and relaxation. In Japan, it is even used in very low doses as an additive to foods and beverages.

Research on L-theanine and Green Tea

The studies in people taking L-theanine supplements and consuming green tea suggest L-theanine is helpful in reducing anxiety symptoms.

One 2012 Japanese study reported in the *Journal of Physiological Anthropology* found college students taking L-theanine were experiencing less anxiety. On the other hand, college students who took a placebo had increases in blood pressure when they experienced physical or psychological stress.

A second Japanese study a year later found graduate students taking L-theanine were experiencing less anxiety when put in a stressful work environment, this compared to their peers taking a placebo. A third study out of the Israel Institute of Technology, Haifa, Israel, found L-theanine helpful to managing anxiety in patients with schizophrenia.

A 2017 report analyzing multiple studies about the effects of green tea on anxiety, reported in the journal, *Phytomedicine,* finds credibility in the evidence previous studies presented. The researchers conclude green tea does influence mood and mental function, including by reducing anxiety and improving memory and attention.

The researchers further noted the effects of green tea are attributable to L-theanine and benefits are even more evident with the combined effect of caffeine and l-theanine. Caffeine and l-theanine cannot produce that same response independent of each other.

Additional Benefits of Green Tea

While there are great mood and body benefits of green tea, as evidenced by research, there are four other positive qualities of green tea.

- **Hydration**. There has been evidence dehydration worsens anxiety and panic attacks. Drinking any beverage is helpful, but green tea is healthier than other drinks because it doesn't contain harmful additives.
- **Opportunity to Relax.** A primary benefit to drinking green tea - whether caffeinated or not - is that it allows you a chance to sit down and relax. Tea is just one of those beverages that are naturally calming, and that can do wonders for your peace of mind.
- **Routine**. In general, routines are naturally relaxing. Pour yourself a cup of tea and enjoy a book or watch your favorite TV, and just simply enjoy your life.
- **Antioxidants**. Green tea is loaded with natural antioxidants, which are beneficial for your health overall. And when your body feels healthy, you're less prone to extreme anxiety.

None of these green tea benefits of will cure your anxiety, but every little bit helps to reduce symptoms, calm your mind, and increase your focus.

Green Tea Versus Coffee

Caffeine in coffee makes you alert because it blocks adenosine, a brain neurotransmitter that promotes sleep. Caffeine gives you energy and makes you more alert because it increases other brain chemicals that counteract adenosine.

But the effect of caffeine is different for people with anxiety because it also inhibits GABA, a calming neurotransmitter. GABA is responsible for relaxing mood and increasing happiness, and low GABA levels are linked to anxiety and panic attacks.

For people with anxiety, green tea is a better option for calming anxiety, managing stress and boosting alertness and concentration. And according to the Mayo Clinic, green tea has a long list of other health benefits from protecting your heart health, lowering blood pressure, reducing inflammation, improving bone health and memory and reducing your risk for certain cancers.

What About Other Teas and Food Sources of L-theanine?

Green tea is not the only tea known for reducing anxiety and stress.

- Peppermint tea does not contain caffeine and has been boasted for its anti-inflammatory properties and its natural muscle relaxant abilities.
- Chamomile tea relaxes muscles and clears your mind to induce peaceful sleep.
- Lemon balm tea impacts stress hormones, improves mood, and promotes healthy energy, rather than the nervous energy that caffeine promotes.
- Passion flower tea is known for its antioxidants and active components that help reduce stress hormones. This tea, however, should **not** be combined with anti-anxiety medications, as there could be adverse effects.
- Rose tea eases your mind and physically relaxes your body, which means a more restful sleep at night.

Green tea is the main source of L-theanine, but if you do not like the taste of green tea, you could consider consuming foods rich in L-theanine. Nuts, whole grains, and broccoli are food sources rich in L-theanine.

The Bottom Line

Drinking green and mood-boosting teas and consuming foods containing L-theanine won't cure your anxiety, but

it can help reduce anxious feelings. And green tea works in synergy with caffeine, which makes a better source of caffeine than coffee.

The use of L-theanine has been extensively studied and drinking green tea is safe. Taking L-theanine supplements is also safe, but researchers suggest taking no more than 200 mg daily in supplement form.

If you suffer from anxiety, talk to your doctor about taking a supplement. But the easiest and best way to enjoy the benefits of L-theanine is by drinking a cup or more of green tea daily.