

**4 CUPPAS A DAY KEEPS THE DENTIST AWAY**

**New research shows how fluoride in tea helps strengthen tooth enamel and help teeth to recover after meals**

Science continues to show that tea, Britain’s’ favorite beverage, is good for our bones, heart, vascular system and skin to name just a few health and wellbeing benefits, whatever our age. Now, new research has come to light which shows that tea is also good for our pearly whites.

In a research review[[1]](#footnote-2) just about to be published in *Oral Health*, Professor Robin Seymour, a member of the **Tea Advisory Panel**, examined evidence linking fluoride with protection against dental decay. Just four cups of tea daily, or 1-2 cups for children, were found to contain enough natural fluoride to help protect teeth from decay.

The review also reported that official European claims allow high fluoride drinks, such as tea, to claim that they strengthen tooth enamel and help teeth to recover after meals.

Commenting on the findings, Professor Seymour said: “A third of children have tooth decay when they start school and dentists have seen a 20% rise in children coming into hospital for tooth extractions since 2010[[2]](#footnote-3). Most adults have fillings and around a third have active tooth decay.

“This shows that we need to do more to prevent this avoidable condition. No child should be coming into hospital to have their teeth removed. After brushing with a fluoride toothpaste, diet is the most important strategy to protect teeth, and tea drinking is a vital part of this”.

Tea is one of the most important sources of fluoride in the British diet because tea plants are often grown in soils which naturally contain fluoride. Previous studies have shown that 4-5 cups of tea a day provide enough fluoride to meet European recommendations[[3]](#footnote-4) while staying within safe limits for fluoride.

Professor Seymour adds: “Many of us take tea for granted and are drinking less. However, the evidence is clear; tea is one of the best available sources of natural fluoride and drinking it helps to protect teeth. While we can get fluoride from toothpaste, a third of men and a quarter of women don’t brush their teeth twice a day[[4]](#footnote-5), which is the recommended frequency.

“There are also studies showing that flavonoid compounds found in tea freshen the breath and kill bacteria in the mouth which cause unpleasant odours[[5]](#footnote-6),[[6]](#footnote-7). This is why I would recommend switching sugary drinks for a cup of tea.

“Children, too, can benefit from the age of four years of age by having unsweetened, milky tea once or twice a day. This could be the start of a lifelong habit that will help to keep the dentist away!”

ENDS

**Editor’s notes**

One mug (240ml) of black blended tea provides 1.18mg fluoride on average. The figure for single estate/specialty tea, which includes green tea, is lower at 0.72mg. Decaffeinated tea is the best provider of fluoride, at 1.68mg per mug. This is probably because decaffeinated tea contains stronger flavoured leaves which have had more opportunity to take up fluoride from the soil.

Brewing tea for longer boosts the fluoride content, according to research presented at the Nutrition Society in 2015[[7]](#footnote-8).

**The Tea Advisory Panel:** The Tea Advisory Panel is supported by an unrestricted educational grant from the **UK TEA & INFUSIONS ASSOCIATION**, the trade association for the UK tea industry. The Panel has been created to provide media with impartial information regarding the health benefits of tea. Panel members include nutritionists; dieticians and doctors.

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1. Seymour R (2017) Teatime. *Oral Health* July/August: pages 1-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [www.nationalsmilemonth.org/facts-figures/](http://www.nationalsmilemonth.org/facts-figures/) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Ruxton CHS, Bond TJ (2015) Fluoride content of retail tea bags and estimates of daily fluoride consumption based on typical tea drinking habits in UK adults and children. Nutrition Bulletin 40(4): 268-278. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. [www.nationalsmilemonth.org/facts-figures/](http://www.nationalsmilemonth.org/facts-figures/) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Zeng QC et al. (2010) The effect of green tea extract

   on the removal of sulfur-containing oral malodor volatiles in vitro and its potential application in chewing gum. Journal of Breath Research 4: 036005. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Narotzki B et al. (2012) Green tea: a promising natural product in oral health. Archives of Oral Biology 57: 429–35. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Ruxton CHS, Bond TJ (2015) Fluoride content of UK retail tea: impact of brew time on teas of different value. Proceedings of the Nutrition Society Irish Section meeting. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)