



Green tea may protect gums against disease

By Stephen Daniells, 09-Mar-2009

Consuming green tea may offer protection against gum disease, a condition that may affect over 30 per cent of the population, suggests a new study from Japan.

Researchers from Kyushu University in Fukuoka, Japan suggest that the antioxidant catechins may be responsible for the protective effects. Previous research has indicated that the antioxidant has anti-inflammatory effects, and gum disease has been linked to an inflammatory response to periodontal bacteria in the mouth.

The researchers report their findings in the *Journal of Periodontology*.

The study, led by Yoshihiro Shimazaki, adds to the ever-growing body of science supporting the anti-cancer benefits of green tea and its polyphenols.

Green tea contains between 30 and 40 per cent of water-extractable polyphenols, while black tea (green tea that has been oxidized by fermentation) contains between 3 and 10 per cent. Oolong tea is semi-fermented tea and is somewhere between green and black tea.

Commenting on the study, David Cochran, DDS, PhD, president of the American Academy of Periodontology (AAP) said: “Periodontists believe that maintaining healthy gums is absolutely critical to maintaining a healthy body. That is why it is so important to find simple ways to boost periodontal health, such as regularly drinking green tea—something already known to possess certain health-related benefits.”

Study details

Shimazaki and his co-workers recruited 940 men aged between 49 and 59, and analysed if green tea consumption had any effect on the incidence of gum disease, as measured using periodontal pocket depth (PD), clinical attachment loss (CAL) of gum tissue, and bleeding on probing (BOP) of the gum tissue

“Since many of us enjoy green tea on a regular basis, my colleagues and I were eager to investigate the impact of green tea consumption on periodontal health, especially considering the escalating emphasis on the connection between periodontal health and overall health,” said Dr Shimazaki.

The Fukuoka-based researchers report that men who regularly drank green tea had superior periodontal health than their peers who drank less green tea.

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Indeed, for every one cup of green tea consumed per day, there was a 0.023-mm decrease in the mean PD, a 0.028-mm decrease in the mean CAL, and a 0.63 per cent decrease in BOP.

Shimazaki and his co-workers propose that catechins may interfere with the body's inflammatory response to periodontal bacteria, thereby promoting periodontal health, and warding off further disease.

The four primary polyphenols found in fresh tealeaves are epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG), epigallocatechin, epicatechin gallate, and epicatechin.

Source: Journal of Periodontology

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“Relationship Between Intake of Green Tea and Periodontal Disease”

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