

Mouth Matters

Dorion on Dentistry

Green Tea



It's showing up everywhere these days. It's no longer just the beverage enjoyed at the end of your dinner at your favorite Chinese restaurant. Green tea in various forms lines today's grocery store shelves and is available in everything from soft drink combinations, to candy bars and chewing gum.

The reason green tea has gained such popularity in our part of the world is that we here in the West have just recently started to discover what ancient Chinese and Japanese medicine has believed for over 4000 years. It not only tastes good but may have several health benefits too.

Although not all the research is conclusive, there have been numerous scientific studies that report the potential health benefits of drinking green tea daily especially for the prevention of heart disease and certain types of cancer.

Researchers from Department of Preventive Dentistry, Kyushu University Faculty of Dental Science in Fukuoka, Japan have now discovered another good reason to enjoy this beverage. In a study published in the Journal of Periodontology earlier this year, it was reported that green tea helped improve the periodontal (gum) health of the 940 middle aged male participants they studied.

"It has been long speculated that green tea possesses a host of health benefits," said study author Dr. Yoshihiro Shimazaki, "And 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."

Periodontal disease refers to a spectrum of inflammatory processes including gingivitis (the mildest form involving only the gums), and periodontitis (a more severe form that involves the connective tissue and bone around the teeth).

Periodontitis is considered to be the second most common disease worldwide, after tooth decay. In North America it affects 30-50% of the population, and is the most common cause of tooth loss after the age of thirty.

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Periodontal disease has also been associated with the progression of other diseases such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

It is believed that the beneficial effects of green tea are due to the family of antioxidants it contains called catechins. Antioxidants are known to help reduce the damaging effects of inflammation in the body and since the damage to our gums from periodontal disease is largely due to inflammation, inhibition of this process can potentially promote healthier gums.

While it's by no means a cure, if a cup a day of green tea can do a small part in helping our patient's stay healthier then bottoms up!

Yours for better dental health,

Rae Dorion, DDS

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