

GREEN TEA MAY CURB PROSTATE CANCER

Italian researchers have shown compounds found in green tea may prevent the development of prostate cancer in men with a pre-cancerous condition.

Doctor Saverio Bettuzzi from the University of Parma in Italy has reported back after a one-year study, which found only one man out of a group of 32 receiving Green Tea Catechins developed prostate cancer — a rate of only 3 percent. In contrast, nine out of 30 men treated with placebo developed prostate cancer, at the expected rate of 30 percent.

Dr Bettuzzi told the American Association for Cancer Research that Green Tea Catechins (GTCs) may be the answer.

"The interest in GTCs and other polyphenols (antioxidants found in many plants) derives from traditional Chinese medicine, but the Mediterranean diet is very rich in vegetables, thus providing high levels of polyphenols, and lower rates of prostate cancer are found in that region as well," he pointed out.

These results support research by Curtin University in Western Australia which has also shown that long-term consumption of green tea can help prevent prostate cancer, which kills one in 11 Australian men.

Professor Colin Binns, who studied a sample of Chinese men who had imbibed green tea for over 20 years, found they were two-thirds less likely to develop prostate cancer.

Buddhist monks first espoused the medicinal power of green tea as far back as 800 AD. In his book, 'Maintaining Health by Drinking Tea', one monk, Eisai, wrote, "Tea has an extraordinary power to prolong life. Tea is the elixir that creates the mountain-dwelling immortal." However it took Westerners a few more centuries to catch on to the tea's health benefits.

Although all teas come from the same botanical source, green tea is unique because of the way it is processed. Freshly picked black tea leaves are 'withered' indoors and allowed to oxidize, whereas green tea leaves are steamed and parched, which better preserves their natural active substances. Steeping green tea in hot water for five minutes can release up to 80% of the leaves' catechins.

Surveys of Japanese tea drinkers have found that those who consume four to six cups of green tea per day have lower levels of breast,

oesophageal, liver, and lung and skin cancer. Professor Binns recommends three to four cups of green tea per day as a healthy recipe, but also warns that no tea is a magical cure for cancer. Green vegetables, which are also high in antioxidants, could be equally important in helping our bodies stop free radicals from damaging our cells.