Phenolic Compunds in Green Tea and Green Tea Kombucha

J. Hillert

2022-11-21

### Introduction

Green tea, white tea, and black tea each originate from the *Camellia sinensis* plant which is native to the tropical and temperate regions of Asia, Africa, and South America (Gopal et al. 2016). Small leaves and leaf buds are unfermented and used to make green tea, while white tea is composed of semi-fermented buds, and black tea is composed of fully fermented old leaves (NCSU 2022). Tea is a globally consumed beverage second only to water and the drink is praised for its numerous health benefits. Briefly, tea has anti-carcinogenic, anti-angiogenic, anti-mutagenic, anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial, hypocholesterolemic, anti-diabetic, and shows protection against Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s disease (Chacko et al. 2010, Gopal et al. 2016). These and many other health benefits are mainly attributed to green tea polyphenols, less so to flavonols and gallic acid derivatives, vitamins, minerals, enzymes, and others (Gopal et al. 2016). Another health drink rising in popularity is Kombucha - which is a fermented beverage resulting from a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast (SCOBY) in a sweetened tea solution for about two weeks. The flavor profile shifts from sweet to tart to sour with increased fermentation time, temperature and SCOBY microbe composition. The total phenolic content (TPC) of kombucha made from green or black tea is over three times greater than regular green or black tea (Zhou et al. 2022). Green tea and kombuchas are popular for their numerous health benefits and fermentation with a SCOBY enhances these benefits and is suggested by Jakubczyk et al. (2020) a diet including kombucha can help support the body’s antioxidative response, especially for those exposed to mental and physical stress.

### Health Benefits of Green Tea and Green Tea Kombucha

Green tea (GT) has antioxidative, anti-carcinogenic, anti-diabetic, anti-hypertensive, anti-inflammatory, anti-mutagenic, anti-proliferative, anti-thrombogenic, among many other properties (Velayutham et al. 2008, Chacko et al. 2010, Gopal et al. 2016) giving the drink its status as a health drink. Heinrich et al. (2011) have shown that a flavanoid-rich diet can help prevent certain cancers and cardiovascular diseases, specifically related to UV-induced damage following sun exposure in women. Polyphenols in GT were shown to protect against many damaging effects of UV radiation, such as sunburn response, immunosuppression, and photo-aging. Flavonoids - epigallocatechingallate (EGCG), epicatechingallate (ECG), and epicatechin (EC) - are easily absorbable and bioavailable upon ingestion with the latter two primarily absorbed in the small intestine and 20-50% recovered in urine. They show that consumption of GT with ~1400 mg of catechins per serving can reduce UV-induced erythema by 16% at 6 weeks and 25% at 12 weeks. Prolonged consumption of GT polyphenols and carotenoids at 6 months decreases overall solar damage and at 12 months reduces UV-induced erythema telangiectasis. This research shows that the body readily absorbs polyphenolic compounds and is able to use and recycle them to some extant before excretion.

Working memory (Schmidt et al. 2014) Body weight (Venables et al. 2008, Wang et al. 2010)

### Polyphenols of Green Tea and Green Tea Kombucha

The components of GT that gives the drink its health benefits comes from polyphenols, flavanols, and gallic acid derivatives (Gopal et al. 2016). Important compounds among the polyphenols includes alkaloids, carbohydrates, catechins, enzymes, free amino acids, minerals and vitamins. The health benefits are most particularly associated with the catechins which comprise 25% - 35% of green tea dry weight. The two most effective antioxidant compounds are EGCG and ECG. EGCG is also the most active and abundant - one cup of GT could have 100-200 mg EGCG. Gopal et al. (2016) found that EGCG can help prevent dental cavities, inhibition of multiple drug resistant Staphylococcus aureus, and potential inhibition of HIV infection. The antioxidant potential of GT can be increased 3.25x (Zhou et al. 2022) through fermentation with a SCOBY. Fermentation is the metabolic breakdown of carbohydrates that produces chemical changes in the organic substances via the action of enzymes associated with the SCOBY (Redzepi and Zilber 2018).

### GTK antioxident activity increased 3.25x (Zhou et al. 2022)

Chemical profile (Jakubczyk et al. 2020) Fermentation time (Hsieh et al. 2021) Catechin degradation (Jayabalan et al. 2007) Health benefits (Cardoso et al. 2020)

### Future kombuchas as a health drink

GT v GTK v PGT v PGTK Health benefits (Cardoso et al. 2020) & Sec. 1

As noted by Heinrich et al. (2011), GT catechins have a range of effects similar to that of cocoa polyphenols, an addition of cocoa to kombucha during the secondary fermentation could cause a synergistic effect with GT polyphenols.

# References

Cardoso, R. R., R. O. Neto, C. T. Dos Santos D’Almeida, T. P. do Nascimento, C. G. Pressete, L. Azevedo, H. S. D. Martino, L. C. Cameron, M. S. L. Ferreira, and F. A. R. de Barros. 2020. [Kombuchas from green and black teas have different phenolic profile, which impacts their antioxidant capacities, antibacterial and antiproliferative activities](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodres.2019.108782). Food Research International (Ottawa, Ont.) 128:108782.

Chacko, S. M., P. T. Thambi, R. Kuttan, and I. Nishigaki. 2010. [Beneficial effects of green tea: A literature review](https://doi.org/10.1186/1749-8546-5-13). Chinese Medicine 5:13.

Gopal, J., M. Muthu, D. Paul, D.-H. Kim, and S. Chun. 2016. [Bactericidal activity of green tea extracts: The importance of catechin containing nano particles](https://doi.org/10.1038/srep19710). Scientific Reports 6:19710.

Heinrich, U., C. E. Moore, S. De Spirt, H. Tronnier, and W. Stahl. 2011. [Green tea polyphenols provide photoprotection, increase microcirculation, and modulate skin properties of women](https://doi.org/10.3945/jn.110.136465). The Journal of Nutrition 141:1202–1208.

Hsieh, Y., M.-C. Chiu, and J.-Y. Chou. 2021. [Efficacy of the kombucha beverage derived from green, black, and pu’er teas on chemical profile and antioxidant activity](https://doi.org/10.1155/2021/1735959). Journal of Food Quality 2021:1–9.

Jakubczyk, K., J. Kałduńska, J. Kochman, and K. Janda. 2020. [Chemical profile and antioxidant activity of the kombucha beverage derived from white, green, black and red tea](https://doi.org/10.3390/antiox9050447). Antioxidants 9:447.

Jayabalan, R., S. Marimuthu, and K. Swaminathan. 2007. [Changes in content of organic acids and tea polyphenols during kombucha tea fermentation](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodchem.2006.05.032). Food Chemistry 102:392–398.

NCSU. 2022. [Camellia sinensis (assam tea, tea camellia, tea plant, tea tree camellia) | north carolina extension gardener plant toolbox](https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/camellia-sinensis/). Database.

Redzepi, R., and D. Zilber. 2018. The noma guide to fermentation: Including koji, kombuchas, shoyus, misos, vinegars, garums, lacto-ferments, and black fruits and vegetables. Artisan Books.

Schmidt, A., F. Hammann, B. Wölnerhanssen, A. C. Meyer-Gerspach, J. Drewe, C. Beglinger, and S. Borgwardt. 2014. [Green tea extract enhances parieto-frontal connectivity during working memory processing](https://doi.org/10.1007/s00213-014-3526-1). Psychopharmacology 231:3879–3888.

Velayutham, P., A. Babu, and D. Liu. 2008. Green tea catechins and cardiovascular health: An update. Current medicinal chemistry 15:1840–1850.

Venables, M. C., C. J. Hulston, H. R. Cox, and A. E. Jeukendrup. 2008. [Green tea extract ingestion, fat oxidation, and glucose tolerance in healthy humans](https://doi.org/10.1093/ajcn/87.3.778). The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition 87:778–784.

Wang, H., Y. Wen, Y. Du, X. Yan, H. Guo, J. A. Rycroft, N. Boon, E. M. R. Kovacs, and D. J. Mela. 2010. [Effects of catechin enriched green tea on body composition](https://doi.org/10.1038/oby.2009.256). Obesity 18:773–779.

Zhou, D.-D., A. Saimaiti, M. Luo, S.-Y. Huang, R.-G. Xiong, A. Shang, R.-Y. Gan, and H.-B. Li. 2022. [Fermentation with tea residues enhances antioxidant activities and polyphenol contents in kombucha beverages](https://doi.org/10.3390/antiox11010155). Antioxidants 11:155.