

## IS BLACK TEA AN IMMUNITY BOOSTER FOR COVID- 19?

Is there any silver lining in the dark cloud for 'Ceylon Tea'? The Tea Research Institute of Sri Lanka (TRI) has released a scientific paper under the theme: 'Anti-viral' properties of tea - black tea may become the unique brew of choice with no side effects to fight against Corona Virus? ".

Low incidence of infected patients:

Sri Lankans habitually consume 03 to 04 cups of Ceylon Black Tea. Therefore, in addition to epidemic control measures and social distancing and hot local temperatures (between 26°C-32°C), the practice of drinking tea may also contribute to the low incidence of infected patients with coronavirus. The infected case and the cases per million people in Sri Lanka are comparatively low. It could be due to a combination of multiple reasons, which certainly requires in-depth investigation.

Power of Ceylon Black Tea as a potential booster:

Several studies are ongoing globally in search of therapeutic options to recognize 'anti-viral' agents which could treat patients affected by COVID 19. However, "prevention is better than cure". TRI has made a genuine effort to investigate the "Power of Ceylon Black Tea" as a potential booster to aid one's immune system to fight against the virus when confronted.

Several studies undertaken in different countries have demonstrated the potential benefits of Black & Green Tea consumption in controlling influenza and common cold generally caused by viral infections. Tea Catechins have the ability to bind onto the surface of the influenza virus and inhibit the spread. TRI has quoted a recently conducted research study from Taiwan where the chemical structure of 64 compounds had been bioinformatically modelled against SARS-CoV- 2.

Black tea has 'theaflavins':

It had been revealed that 'Theaflavins' could potentially inhibit a critical SARS-CoV- 2 enzyme, and thereby, theoretically inhibit COVID-19. Theaflavins are antioxidant polyphenols that are formed during enzymatic oxidation process (fermentation) in the manufacture of Black Tea. In contrast to Green Tea, Black Tea is rich in Theaflavins due to the manufacturing process. An alkaloid, found in tea is Theaflavins, a chemical shown to alleviate respiratory diseases such as asthma, chronic bronchitis and other lung diseases. It relaxes and opens air passages in the lungs making it easier to breathe.

Inhaling the fumes (steam) of hot black tea:

The TRI release has highlighted that, inhaling boiling water mixed with Black Tea can facilitate the clearing of the passages towards the lungs. As the COVID-19 epidemic is a similar illness where the patients find it difficult to breathe. The scientists at the Sri Lanka Tea Board Laboratory suggest that frequent consumption of hot black tea is capable of flushing viruses trapped in the throat area. This practice is believed to improve immune capacity and inhibit

inflammation due to Catechins and Polyphenols contained in Black Tea. Further, inhaling the fumes (steam) of hot black tea at high temperatures facilitates the removal of viruses trapped around the nasal area and opens a pathway for the tea Theaflavins to reach the lungs and protect it from viruses.

Drink Black tea good for immune system:

It could be assumed in respect of the circumstantial evidence available that daily consumption of Black Tea (03 to 04 cups without sugar or milk) is very useful and linked to the boosting of the immune system of normal human beings against respiratory diseases. The COVID-19 is an influenza-like illness which could be perceived to be curtailed by Theaflavins, one of the most active ingredients in Black Tea as explained in this review.

Please note that Black Tea is neither a medically proven prophylaxis nor a treatment against COVID-19, but it is worth conducting further research to investigate the possible anti-viral benefits of Theaflavins in Black Tea against COVID-19. Clinical trials however, need to be initiated prior to claiming benefits against COVID-19 in humans. It is premature to make concrete claims until in-vivo experiments or Research & Development on living cells are undertaken as per WHO guidelines. Nevertheless, Sri Lankans strongly believe that Ceylon Tea, the miracle Black Tea beverage is certainly one of them.

The relevant scientific papers are available with the Sri Lanka Tea Board for any references.  
(Courtesy of Sri Lanka Tea Board/ 03/04/20)