

Should You Share This Healthy Drink With Your Pet?

Many health-conscious pet parents consume this antioxidant-rich beverage and wonder if it's okay for their furry family members, too. It improves brain function and dental health, and reduces risk for malignancy, heart disease and diabetes in humans. Could it do the same for your pet?

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Green tea is a nutritional powerhouse, rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals; its health benefits include lowered risk of several diseases, including cancer
- Many health-conscious pet parents drink green tea and wonder if they can share it with furry family members; it's reasonable to assume it may provide similar protective benefits for dogs and cats
- Green tea can also be a part of your pet's detoxification protocol, and offers soothing relief for hot spots and mouth sores as well
- It's important to give your dog or cat only naturally decaffeinated brewed green tea; pets who are fasting or who have little appetite should not be given green tea extract

Since green tea is a huge hit with a growing number of health-conscious pet parents, they're naturally curious about the potential benefits of this nutritional powerhouse for furry family members.

Green tea is an excellent source of antioxidants and alkaloids, vitamins A, D, E, C, B, B5, H, and K, and manganese and other beneficial minerals such as zinc, chromium, and selenium. Fresh tea leaves contain powerful antioxidants called polyphenols (essentially a series of plant-based chemicals called catechins).

Studies show that epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG) is the most powerful catechin in green tea, supplying 20 to 35 mg in a single cup. In one study, scientists found EGCG to be 25 to 100 times more potent than vitamins C and E. Another reported that one cup offers antioxidant effects greater than a serving of broccoli, spinach, carrots, or strawberries.¹

Benefits of Green Tea to Human Health

There are several important health benefits of green tea for humans:²

- Improves brain function
- Lowers type 2 diabetes risk
- Lowers cancer risk
- Improves dental health
- Lowers heart disease and stroke risk

- Increases longevity
- Increases fat burning and weight loss
- Lowers Alzheimer's and Parkinson's risk
- Contains bioactive compounds with medicinal properties

Because tea is known to accumulate fluoride, heavy metals, and other toxins from soil and water, I recommend selecting an organic product that has been grown in a pristine environment. Many organic green tea providers also offer third party testing for heavy metals. In addition, green tea contains caffeine, which is toxic for pets, so be sure to purchase only naturally decaffeinated varieties for dogs and cats.

How Green Tea May Be Beneficial to Dog and Cat Health

According to information provided by veterinarians Steve Marsden, Shawn Messonnier, and Cheryl Yuill in a VCA Animal Hospitals article:

"Green tea might be beneficial in any condition calling for the use of antioxidants. In humans, green tea is indicated as an antioxidant, an anti-cancer agent, and to lower blood cholesterol. Several tumor types are inhibited by green tea, including cancers of the stomach, gall bladder, prostate, uterus, lung, intestine, colon, rectum and pancreas.

Green tea also inhibits breast cancer by binding to estrogen receptors, making it of potential value in the treatment of mammary gland cancer in small animals. Its comprehensive action against a variety of tumors in humans suggests green tea may provide the same benefits in animals.

Although they are absorbed into all body tissues, green tea catechins concentrate in the liver and digestive tract of dogs and laboratory animals, making it more likely they will be protective to these body regions."³

While there have been no clinical trials of green tea to treat cancer in pets, in humans, regular consumption seems to reduce the incidence of stomach, colon, and pancreatic cancer. It's reasonable to assume it may provide similar protective benefits for dogs and cats. If your furry family member has been diagnosed with cancer, be sure to talk with your veterinarian first before adding green tea (or any supplement) to your pet's treatment protocol.

Inactivation and excretion of carcinogens plays a big role in keeping your pet's body cancer-free. Since the catechins found in green tea dramatically modify cancer-causing molecules that damage cellular DNA, I often recommend decaffeinated green tea extract as part of a detoxification protocol to support liver and kidney function.

Green tea infusion (using tea that has been cooled) is also one of my favorite cleaning agents for dirty pet ears. It can also be used to soothe hot spots⁴ and mouth sores. Research shows green tea is beneficial for periodontal disease in dogs,⁵ improves insulin sensitivity in obese dogs,⁶ and can also benefit moderate inflammation in dogs.⁷

Interestingly, when I interviewed Roxanne Stone, Vice President of Research and Development for Answers Pet Food, a company that makes raw organic diets for dogs and cats, about their use of fermentation as a method to eliminate pathogens in raw products, I learned that one of the ingredients they use for this purpose is fermented decaffeinated green tea. If you're interested, you can watch the interview [here](#).

Recipe for Organic Decaf Green Tea for Pets

1. Combine 1 liter (about 4 cups) of purified water and 1 tea bag or 1 tablespoon of loose tea leaves
2. Steep for 15 minutes
3. Remove the tea bag or use a strainer to remove the tea leaves
4. Store the tea in a covered, preferably glass pitcher in the fridge for up to 3 days

Add the following amounts of green tea to your pet's morning and evening meal:

- Cats — 1 tablespoon
- Small dogs — 1/8th cup
- Medium dogs — 1/4 to 1/2 cup
- Large dogs — 1/2 to 1 cup

Green tea also comes in supplement form, but if you choose to use a supplement instead of tea, I recommend finding a product specifically blended and dosed for pets.

Green Tea vs. Green Tea Extract

As I mentioned earlier, there has been very little research on the effects of green tea on the health of pets when compared to the vast amount of research demonstrating the health benefits in humans. What is much more common in the literature is using different types of green tea extracts in animal models, rather than the tea itself.

One study that has made its way around the internet, especially among groups who believe pets should eat nothing except a lifetime of ultraprocessed food, points to the concerning results of a particular Beagle study.

The dogs were fasted and given massive doses (up to 1000 mgs/kg per day of concentrated green tea extract, not green tea, in capsule form over several months). Sadly, the study was ended early due to "extensive morbidity, mortality, and pathology of many major organs," involving toxicity of the dogs' livers, kidneys, and gastrointestinal (GI) tracts.⁸

It must be pointed out that wise pet parents would never give these massive doses of any concentrated extract to their pets, and pets would never voluntarily consume this much extract on their own. Interestingly, a follow-up study in non-fasted dogs under the same testing conditions and dose levels showed no such toxicity.⁹

The authors of the second study noted that systemic exposures were actually lower in fasted vs. non-fasted dogs, which could suggest that fasting may have somehow increased the vulnerability of organ systems and amplified the toxic effects of the active ingredients in the large amounts of green tea extract. And toxicology studies have not demonstrated any toxic effects with decaf green tea itself.

The take home message from these studies: green tea is completely safe, however, concentrated extracts may not be safe in ultra-high doses, so use common sense with dosing (it would be impossible to administer these doses to pets in the form of cooled teas) and don't offer excessive amounts of green tea (or extract) to any pet who isn't eating well.

Sources and References

[PetfoodIndustry.com, February 10, 2017](#)

^{1, 2} [Mercola.com](#)

³ [VCA Hospitals, December 1, 2008](#)

⁴ [Kim, B. et al. Journal of Veterinary Clinics, 24\(4\):550-556, 2007](#)

⁵ [Chang, H. et al. Journal of Veterinary Clinics, 26\(1\):41-47, 2009](#)

⁶ [Serisier, S. et al. British Journal of Nutrition, June 1, 2008](#)

⁷ [Alagawany, M. et al. Journal of Animal Nutrition and Animal Physiology, Volume 104, Issue 1, January 2020, Pages 245-256](#)

⁸ [Toxicology, 2009 Jun 16;260\(1-3\):28-36](#)

⁹ [International Journal of Toxicology, 2011 Feb;30\(1\):19-20](#)
