Not only is tea soothing, delicious and the perfect hot beverage for a cold winter’s night, but for centuries it has been associated with health benefits. Interestingly, it’s only in recent years that its medicinal properties have been investigated scientifically. What did they find? Tea’s health benefits are largely due to its high content of flavonoids—a type of antioxidant that helps protect you from developing heart disease and certain types of cancer, and even helps reduce premature aging. In fact, tea can have up to 10 times the amount of flavonoids found in fruits and vegetables!

Although all tea is made from the same tea plant, Camellia Sinensis, each type of tea has its own characteristics and health advantages:

**BLACK TEA.** The most common variety, black tea is the most heavily processed—meaning it is rolled, fermented and then dried and crushed. The extensive processing gives it a strong and slightly bitter taste. It has the highest caffeine level—about 40 milligrams per cup (a cup of coffee usually has 50-100).

**HEALTH BENEFITS:**
- Fewer antioxidants than other tea varieties (due to more extensive processing)
- Linked to lowering cholesterol
- Helps maintain cardiovascular function and a healthy circulatory system

**GREEN TEA.** One of the most popular types of tea, green tea offers a more delicate flavor due to the short fermentation process. It contains 25 milligrams of caffeine.

**HEALTH BENEFITS:**
- More antioxidants than black and oolong teas, but less than white tea
- Protects against everything from cancer to heart disease
- Good for skin and teeth
- Can be used to help maintain a healthy blood sugar level

**OO LONG TEA.** Known as the tea often served at Chinese restaurants, this tea is fermented for a shorter time than black tea, which gives it a full-bodied, rich taste. It offers a flavorful fragrance and sweet aroma and contains a mid-level amount of caffeine at 30 milligrams per cup.

**HEALTH BENEFITS:**
- May support weight loss
- Thought to increase metabolic rate

**WHITE TEA.** Made from young leaves that have not yet turned green, this tea is the purest and least processed of all teas—giving it a lighter color and milder flavor than other varieties. It also has one of the lowest levels of caffeine—only 15 milligrams per cup.

**HEALTH BENEFITS:**
- No fermentation occurs during processing, so white tea contains the highest level of antioxidants among the teas
- Has the same potential cardiovascular and cancer-fighting benefits as other teas
- Shown to help people with diabetes (by helping balance blood sugar levels) and reducing LDL cholesterol (the lousy form of cholesterol)

Watch bottled teas, which usually contain added sugar and very low levels of antioxidants. For a good antioxidant-rich, low-sugar bottled tea try Honest Tea (www.honesttea.com).