Herb Of The Month

January 1, 2001 By Michael Onstott

Green Tea

PART: Young leaves

FORMS: Steamed or dried leaves prepared as tea; capsules; tablets

USES: Mild stimulant; antioxidant that may protect against cancer, heart disease, dental cavities, skin damage, stomach problems and diarrhea

DOSE: 3 to 5 cups or 300 to 600 mg green-tea extract (as caps or tabs) a day

MONTHLY COST: $7-$14 (as tea); $7-$20 (caps or tabs)

CAUTIONS: To minimize caffeine intake, pregnant women, nursing mothers and people with high blood pressure or heart or kidney problems should not exceed three cups per day.

Feeling mentally sluggish but don’t need a major buzz? Green tea -- containing less available caffeine than coffee or black tea (the fermented version of green tea) -- can not only give you a healthy lift but promote improved digestion as well. In addition, green-tea extracts used in a rinse-and-brush regimen were found in clinical studies to prevent dental plaque deposits and cavities. Population studies show that people who drink approximately five cups per day (it’s tasty, too!), compared with those who drink little or none, have a lower risk of cancer onset, cancer recurrence and strokes, as well as lower levels of harmful cholesterol. Meanwhile, test-tube experiments have found that natural chemicals called catechins and other tannins (found more abundantly in green than black tea) have many anti-properties -- bacteria, viruses, diarrhea, even cancer. We need more clinical studies to prove the benefits of tea, but the jury is in on one thing: Green is good.

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