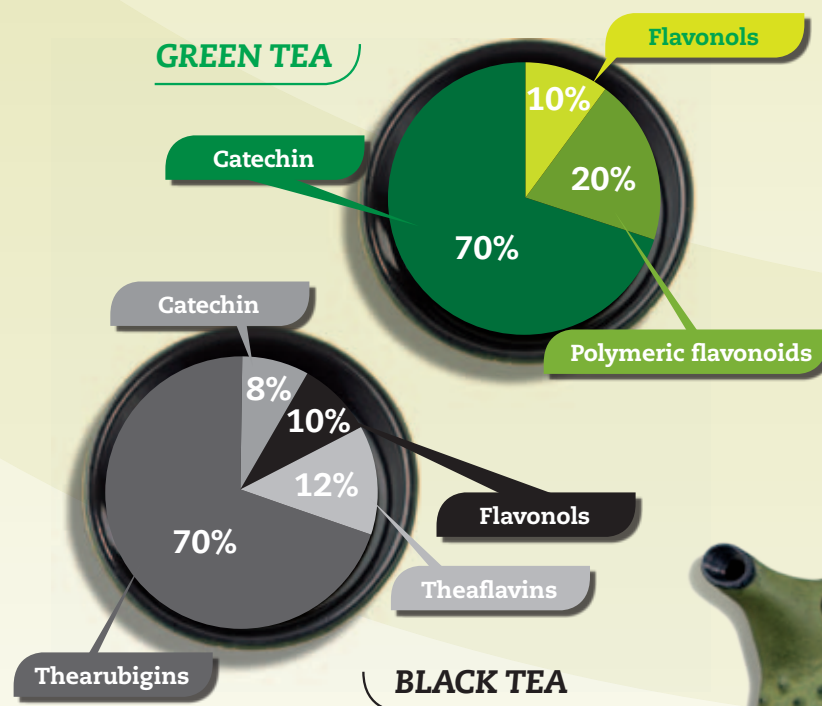


## What's in a cup of tea?

Tea is the most consumed beverage in the world, after water. Currently, there are more than 3000 types of tea on the market – different kinds of green, white, oolong, black and pu-erh tea. The main ingredients of tea that affect our health are flavonoids. These are a group of phytochemicals with considerable antioxidant power, which can neutralise the action of free radicals.

### GOOD TO KNOW

Concentrations of the different kinds of flavonoids differ between the types of tea and the area of cultivation. For example, green tea contains more catechins, whereas black tea has more complex thearubigins and theaflavins. This may be one reason for some of the different health effects of green and black tea.



### Flavonoids

More than 4000 flavonoids have currently been identified. They can be divided into various sub-classes and some of the characteristics they are attributed with include that they are anti-inflammatory, anti-carcinogenic,

anti-microbial and anti-allergic. They are also strong antioxidants – some are even more powerful than vitamin C or vitamin E – and help to protect cells from damage caused by an excess of free radicals. Green tea is rich in flavonoids also known as catechins.



## Health benefits

### Tea and its effects on cardiovascular disease

Drinking more than three cups of tea per day has been associated with a lower incidence of cardiovascular diseases (e.g. coronary heart disease, stroke) and a reduction of risk factors, e.g. low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol.

### Tea and the prevention of cancer

The correlation between drinking tea and cancer prevention is still a matter of debate. Significant positive effects of green tea have been reported relating to the risk of cancer of the colorectum (for women), breast, oesophagus, stomach, pancreas, prostate or lungs. However, other studies reported no association, or the results do not appear consistent enough to allow a firm conclusion. The situation regarding the effects of black tea is less certain than that of green tea.

### Tea and its effect on bone density

Drinking five or more cups of black tea over a long-term (six or more years) may have a positive effect on bone mineral density (BMD), particularly in older women. A high BMD is an indicator of strong bones and this may help reduce the risk of osteoporosis, including hip fractures.

### Tea and its effect on iron levels

Tea could inhibit iron absorption if it is consumed simultaneously with food containing haem iron, e.g. meat, fish, and poultry. However, this effect depends on the daily intake of iron and, of course, on the iron levels of the tea drinker. Healthy people with a minimal risk of iron deficiency have no cause to restrict their tea consumption, but vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, pregnant women and those with low iron levels should avoid drinking tea at mealtimes.

