

Coffee, milk tea, and matcha can be healthy for you

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FOR many busy bees, a day is never complete without their dose of nectar— usually comfort drinks like coffee, milk or bubble tea, matcha, or yogurt shake. They may not be usually considered as healthy, but these seemingly sinful drinks can actually be good for the body. Cue huge sigh of relief. From powerful antioxidants to anti-inflammatory properties, your go-to beverage can also bring health benefits in every sip.



“While water should be the undisputed No. 1 drink in your list, adding other kinds of beverages to your daily rotation can also support your health in many ways. They can help you finish your tasks, or relax and unwind. Some can even address gut issues,” says Angelo B. Lozada, MD from the section of gastroenterology of the top hospital in the Philippines Makati Medical Center (Makatimed, www.makatimed.net.ph). “The key really is to be smart about it and choose those that provide additional nutritional value, not empty calories.” For starters, coffee’s ability to improve brain activity goes beyond letting us finish daily tasks. “Caffeine in coffee stimulates the central nervous system to encourage release of dopamine and serotonin, improving not only attention and learning but also mood and even depression,” reveals Lozada. “Coffee is rich in antioxidants that may protect the brain from oxidative stress that leads to cell damage. Studies have shared that drinking a cup of joe daily is also linked to lower chances of dementia, Alzheimer’s disease, and Parkinson’s.”

Wondering why milk tea feels like happiness and comfort in a glass? “It’s likely because its main ingredient—which is black tea in many recipes—contains L-theanine, an amino acid that helps achieve relaxation. It does so by raising gammaaminobutyric acid, also known as GABA or the neurotransmitter associated with the state of being calm, alleviating stress and anxiety,” shares Lozada.

Another drink that’s all the rage these days is the earthy matcha, which is a specific kind of green tea that’s known for its various wellness perks. “One thing that stood out for matcha is that it’s a great source of epigallocatechin-3-gallate or EGCG, which is a powerful anti-inflammatory plant compound that has many benefits, especially on gut health,” underlines Lozada. “Good gut health doesn’t only mean better digestion and regularity, it can also help maintain healthy weight and blood sugar levels, preventing a number of metabolic and chronic diseases.”

Its fresh milky-tangy goodness has made yogurt a popular pick-me-up. While yogurt is best known to provide calcium and probiotics, its protein content also deserves some attention. “Yogurt shakes and smoothies can be taken before a workout to give you the protein you need to burn more and build muscle. You may also opt to have it ready after exercise as protein also helps you refuel your body,” explains Lozada. While these widely popular drinks do offer health benefits, Makatimed says to still be mindful of how you enjoy your favorite beverage, especially if you’re buying from popular chains. “If you want a coffee or matcha latte, try healthier options like soy or almond milk. Avoid milk tea add-ons like jelly or tapioca pearls to shave off unwanted calories. For your yogurt shake, pair it with healthy ingredients like fruits and nuts. If you can, ask to lessen the amount of sugar, use a sugar substitute, or avoid any sweetener altogether,” Lozada.

“It’s best to take these drinks as is, plain and simple, to relish their health benefits. The key is mastering self-discipline to resist indulging the sugary variations of these beverages and to consume them moderately.”