Tea and Teenagers: Caffeine, Sleep and Sense

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Tea for teenagers, in summary:** Tea for teenagers explained: tea vs energy drinks, sleep timing, sugar concerns in bubble tea and chai latte, sensible daily caffeine.

Tea and teenagers is mostly a caffeine and sleep conversation, and tea generally comes out well against the alternatives. This sits in the family cluster beside tea for kids.

Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in May 2026.

General information about tea, not medical advice. For children, older adults, pregnancy, or anyone on medication, follow advice from a GP, pharmacist, midwife or health visitor. Do not change medication or a child diet based on this page.

Tea vs energy drinks

For teens consuming caffeine anyway, tea is a far gentler, lower dose, lower sugar option than energy drinks, and the L theanine in tea makes its caffeine feel smoother, see L theanine.

Sleep is the real issue

Teenage sleep is easily disrupted, and afternoon or evening caffeine is a common hidden cause. Keep caffeinated tea to earlier in the day, see how long caffeine lasts.

Total daily intake

It is the running total across all sources, tea, cola, energy drinks, chocolate, that matters, not tea alone. Tea is easy to keep modest and is a good place to consolidate if replacing worse sources, see the caffeine guide .

Anxiety and exams

Caffeine can worsen exam season anxiety and jitters for some teens; a weaker brew or a caffeine free herbal in stressful periods is a sensible swap, see L theanine and caffeine.

Sugar

Sweetened or bottled iced teas can carry high sugar; plain or lightly sweetened brewed tea is far better, see sugar in tea.

A reasonable framing

Rather than banning, framing tea as the sensible caffeinated choice, modest, early, unsweetened, often works better than prohibition that pushes teens to energy drinks.

Summary

Tea is a comparatively sensible teen caffeine source; keep it earlier in the day, watch the all sources total, prefer unsweetened, and swap to caffeine free in high anxiety periods, see the caffeine guide.

Tea and teenagers at a glance

Field	Detail
Caffeine tolerance	Generally similar to adults by mid-teens; younger teens still developing sensitivity
Tea vs energy drinks	Tea is dramatically safer; the same caffeine load comes with L-theanine modulation and no added sugars or unregulated stimulants
Sleep impact	The main practical concern; teens are at peak risk of caffeine-disrupted sleep affecting school performance
Recommended daily caffeine	Under-18s: keep total caffeine below 100mg daily; that's roughly 2 cups of black tea OR 1 small coffee
Best teas for teens	Black tea in morning; green tea early afternoon; herbal/decaf evening
Avoid for teens	Energy drinks (regardless of "tea-based" marketing), bubble tea with high sugar, late-evening caffeinated tea
Sugar concern	Bubble tea and milky chai variants in coffee shops can contain 40-80g sugar per serving; substantial concern
The bigger context	Teen sleep deprivation is common in the UK; caffeine timing is one controllable factor

What teens should drink

For morning alertness, black tea like PG Tips or Yorkshire Tea delivers caffeine in the smoother L-theanine form. Midday, green tea is gentler. For the evening, caffeine-free peppermint or chamomile and rooibos, or Twinings Sleep as a wind-down. Whatever the choice, it beats energy drinks and high-sugar bubble teas as a daily habit. Browse the full tea shop; free UK delivery is over £35.

Reference noted

- EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine (2015)
- NHS guidance on caffeine

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Take the simplest thing on this page that fits your routine. Range and ritual are for week two.

More tea reading

For caffeine context see the caffeine content guide. For children-and-tea context see tea for kids. For sleep-tea options see the sleep tea overview. For caffeine-free alternatives see the herbal tea, rooibos, and chamomile.

More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea
- Oolong tea
- White tea
- Herbal tea
- Caffeine in tea
- How to make tea properly
- Loose leaf vs teabag

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