Can Cats Drink Tea?

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Can cats drink tea, in summary:** No: cats are caffeine sensitive and often lactose intolerant, and even decaf has traces. Water only, a fountain helps, vet for any real ingestion.

"Can cats drink tea?" The answer is no, for clear reasons. This sits in the pets cluster beside can dogs drink tea.

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

General information, not veterinary advice. Every animal is different, so if your cat has swallowed caffeine or you are unsure, ring a vet or an animal poison line straight away.

Tea and cats, at a glance

Given to a cat	Verdict
Black / green / any true tea	No, caffeine sensitive, even decaf has traces
Milky tea	Worse, many adult cats are lactose intolerant
Caffeine free herbal	Only tiny, under vet guidance, never casual
Fresh water (a fountain helps)	Yes, the only thing a cat needs to drink

The short answer, and the milk myth

The short answer is a clear no. Cats are markedly sensitive to caffeine, and a small body mass means a quantity that is trivial for an adult human is comparatively large for a cat, so true tea, which always contains caffeine, and even decaf, which retains traces, are unsuitable. The familiar cartoon of a cat lapping a saucer of milky tea is wrong twice over: beyond the caffeine, many adult cats are lactose intolerant, so the milk itself causes a stomach upset. Curiosity plus small size is the real risk, since a cat investigating a warm mug can ingest more, relative to its weight, than anyone would expect. See milk in tea and the caffeine guide.

What cats should drink, and the caffeine-free nuance

The only thing a cat needs to drink is fresh water, and a cat that drinks reluctantly is far better encouraged by a water fountain, since moving water suits feline instinct, than by anything flavoured. It is tempting to

assume a herbal infusion is fine because it has no caffeine, but that does not follow: caffeine is the headline danger, not the only one, and several botanicals that are harmless for people are unsuitable for cats, whose bodies handle many plant compounds differently. So even a caffeine-free infusion is a veterinary question rather than a casual offering. The clear position is not "herbal is safe, tea is not" but "water is what a cat needs, and anything else is a vet conversation", see safe herbal teas for dogs.

If your cat drinks tea

Scale the response to the amount and the cat. A single small lick of weak tea from an unattended mug is usually a minor matter for a healthy adult cat, the kind of thing to note and watch. A real quantity, a strong brew, a kitten, an elderly or unwell cat, or any symptoms such as restlessness, a racing heart, vomiting, tremors or agitation, shifts it firmly into vet territory and warrants contacting a vet or an animal poison line immediately rather than waiting or searching the web. The companion page is can dogs drink tea.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Freshness beats provenance for most drinkers. Buy a smaller bag more often.

Pet-safety reading

- Can dogs drink tea
- Is tea toxic to dogs
- Safe herbal teas for dogs
- The caffeine guide

Want to actually buy a good one?

Once that is settled, buy a good tea for your own cup and judge it by the taste, not by the marketing. To see the range, browse tea and herbal infusions at teas.co.uk or the full tea shop. For your own cup the wiki rule is simple: go by the taste and a plain description, ignore the marketing, compare the price per cup, and expect free UK delivery over £35.

Browse the tea range ?

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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