Tea Myths Debunked

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Tea myths debunked, in summary:** A UK guide to common tea myths: dehydration false, milk-antioxidants overstated, fat-burning inflated. Real effects identified at proper scale.

Tea is wrapped in confident claims, most of them half true at best. This sits at the centre of the tea myths cluster beside fact checking tea TikTok.

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

General information, not medical advice. Where a myth touches health, the answer is given with its evidence; persistent concerns belong with a GP or pharmacist.

Quick reference: common tea myths fact-checked

Claim	The verdict
"Tea dehydrates you"	Myth. Tea hydrates at normal intake; mild diuresis outweighed by water content
"Milk destroys antioxidants"	Overstated. Milk modestly reduces some polyphenol availability, doesn't eliminate benefit
"Green tea burns fat"	Inflated. Small metabolic effect, easily outweighed by ordinary eating
"Tea is a superfood"	Marketing. Polyphenols are research interest, not proven panacea
"Tea boosts immunity"	Marketing. No clinical evidence of meaningful immune effect at normal consumption
"Tea cures cancer"	False. Some lab studies show interesting compounds; clinical evidence absent
"Herbal tea is real tea"	No. True tea is Camellia sinensis; herbal infusions are tisanes (different category)
"Tea stunts growth"	False. No evidence of growth effect from normal tea consumption
"Tea makes you sleep"	Depends on tea. Caffeinated tea generally not sleep-inducing; chamomile may modestly help
"Tea stains teeth"	True but routinely overstated. Real surface staining; comparable to coffee

Claim	The verdict
"Tea blocks iron absorption"	True but specific. Tannins reduce non-heme iron absorption when consumed with iron-rich food
"Caffeine in tea is gentler than coffee"	Partly true. Same caffeine but L-theanine modifies the perceived effect

How to read any tea claim

Tea is wrapped in confident health claims, most of them a small truth inflated into marketing-grade exaggeration, and the inflated versions push people toward products and habits that do not deliver what they promise. The useful skill is not memorising verdicts but spotting the pattern, of which there are three. First, a real but tiny effect (antioxidants, metabolism, relaxation) blown up into a major health claim. Second, a cultural habit (milk ruins it, squeeze the bag, never reuse) dressed up as a law of nature. Third, a genuine, well-evidenced effect (caffeine, tannin and iron, dental staining) that is real but routinely mis-scaled. For any claim, find the kernel of truth, then apply the right scale, which handles new marketing claims as well as the old ones. The big three debunks have their own pages: does tea dehydrate you, does milk stop tea working and does tea burn fat.

The genuinely true ones

Several common claims are genuinely true at the right scale. Tea does stain teeth, real surface discolouration comparable to coffee and mitigated by ordinary brushing, see is tea bad for teeth. Tea does reduce iron absorption, specifically non-heme iron taken with a meal, which matters for vegetarians, vegans and anyone low in iron, and is removed simply by leaving an hour between tea and food. Tea does contain caffeine, roughly 50 to 90mg per cup for black tea and less for green and white, see the caffeine guide. And the caffeine in tea is genuinely perceived as gentler than coffee, because the L-theanine alongside it modifies how the same molecule feels, even though the molecule is identical. These are real effects, routinely mis-scaled rather than wrong.

What to buy

Knowing the myths lets you buy for the right reasons: loose-leaf or English Breakfast for an everyday cup that genuinely counts toward fluid; green tea for the best-evidenced (still modest) benefit; matcha for caffeine balanced by L-theanine; and a chamomile or peppermint for genuine comfort rather than a cure. Browse the full tea shop; free UK delivery over £35.

Reference noted

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

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Start cheap, stay cheap until something stops you. Most rich teas reward patience, not budget.

Tea-myths reading

- Does tea dehydrate you
- Does milk stop tea working
- Does tea burn fat
- Fact-checking tea TikTok

More related guides

- Tea TikTok Trends Debunked: What's Real and What's Rubbish
- Tea Legends and Myths (Enjoyed, Then Fact Checked)
- Aged Tea: What Really Improves, and What Just Stales

More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea
- Oolong tea
- White tea
- Herbal tea
- Caffeine in tea
- How to make tea properly
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