Does Tea Stunt Your Growth?

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Does tea stunt your growth, in summary:** Does tea stunt your growth? Essentially a myth: no evidence tea affects height. The small grain of truth is iron absorption, not bone growth.

A classic line told to children, and it is essentially a myth. This belongs among the tea myths, beside tea myths debunked.

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

Myth versus reality, at a glance

Claim	The reality
"Tea stunts your growth"	Myth: no evidence tea affects height or bone growth
"It is total nonsense, ignore it"	Also wrong: there is a real iron-absorption grain of truth
The actual mechanism	Tannins reduce non-haem iron uptake at mealtimes
Who it matters for	Children drinking lots of strong tea with marginal iron intake
What actually affects growth	Overall nutrition and iron status, not tea itself
The practical fix	Tea away from meals; caffeine is the better reason to limit kids

Where the grain of truth actually is

The idea that tea stunts a child's growth is essentially a myth: there is no credible evidence that tea affects height or bone growth, and the line survives because it is a convenient thing to tell children rather than because it is true. But a responsible answer does not just say "myth" and stop, because there is one small, real grain of truth, and it is iron, not bones. The tannins in tea inhibit the absorption of non-haem iron, the form found in plant foods, when strong tea is drunk with or just after a meal. In a child who drinks a lot of strong tea around mealtimes and already has a marginal iron intake, that could contribute to low iron, and it is iron deficiency, not tea itself, that can affect a child's development and energy. So the chain is real but indirect and conditional, about iron status in a specific pattern of heavy tea drinking, never a direct effect on

the growth plates or final height. See tea and iron.

The practical takeaway for parents

The advice is reassuring and specific. There is no reason to fear tea stunting height, and the better reason to limit a child's tea is caffeine, sleep and the displacement of more useful drinks, not a growth scare. If iron is a real concern for a particular child, the lever is simple and well supported: keep strong tea away from mealtimes so the tannins are not competing with the iron in the food, rather than banning tea outright; vitamin C at the meal offsets some of the tannin effect too. Banning tea entirely is both unnecessary and slightly counterproductive, since it makes tea a forbidden, desirable thing for no real gain. A child with suspected iron deficiency is a matter for a clinician. See can children drink tea and caffeine in tea.

Why the myth is so durable

The line has lasted not because anyone measured shorter children who drank tea, but because it is useful parental shorthand: a simple, memorable rule that discourages young children from a stimulant drink, and simple rules outlive the reasoning that produced them. Over a couple of generations the practical intent, do not give small children a lot of strong caffeinated tea, hardened into a pseudo-biological claim about height. That is the pattern behind a striking share of tea folklore: a sensible, narrow piece of advice gets compressed into a dramatic universal, the drama makes it spread, and the original core gets lost, see tea myths debunked.

Want to actually buy a good one?

For a caffeine-free family cup, browse the herbal range, a fruit or rooibos blend, or the full tea shop. Choose by the cup and the description, work out what a cup costs, and remember that UK orders over £35 are delivered free.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Adopt the simplest habit this page suggests and see how it fits your day. Anything beyond that can wait until week two.

Tea-myths reading

- Caffeine in tea
- Black tea
- Green tea
- Herbal tea overview

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

Earn rewards on teas.co.uk

Earn loyalty points on every order. Free to join.

+100 pts

Create your free account

Welcome bonus + earn on every order.



100 pts = 1 tree

Plant a tree in Scotland

Pledge points to our reforestation partner.



teas.co.uk · Tunbridge Wells, Kent · hello@teas.co.uk · 3-click cancel at teas.co.uk/cancel/