Tea for Colds and Flu

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Tea, colds and flu, in short:** tea will not cure or prevent a cold, and no tea genuinely "boosts immunity". What it does well is soothe: warm fluids ease a sore throat and congestion, honey and lemon comfort, and ginger settles. Rest, fluids and time do the real work.

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

A hot cup is one of the nicest things about being poorly, and it genuinely helps you feel better: warm fluids soothe a raw throat, loosen congestion and keep you hydrated. Just be clear about what it cannot do, it will not cure a cold or stop you catching one.

What tea can and cannot do for a cold

There is no cure for the common cold; it runs its course in a week or so whatever you drink. What helps is symptom comfort and staying hydrated, and warm drinks are good at both. The NHS guide to the common cold sets out what actually helps. See also Wikipedia: common cold.

The truth about "immunity" teas

Teas sold as "immune boosting" or "defence" blends are marketing more than medicine. No tea has been shown to prevent colds or meaningfully strengthen the immune system. A varied diet, sleep and not smoking matter far more. Enjoy a ginger and lemon blend because it is warming and pleasant, not because it will keep the bugs away.

What genuinely soothes

- **Honey and lemon.** Honey soothes a sore throat and eases coughing; lemon is pleasant and adds vitamin C, though the effect on the cold itself is small. See Wikipedia: honey.
- **Ginger.** Warming and settling, good if you feel queasy.
- **Peppermint and steam.** The aroma and warm steam help congestion feel clearer.
- **Chamomile.** Comforting, helpful for resting up.

Caffeine and rest

When you are ill, rest is the priority. Heavy caffeine late in the day can disrupt sleep, so lean on caffeine-free herbals in the evening and save the builder's tea for the morning.

At a glance

Cup	What it does for a cold
Honey and lemon	Soothes throat, eases cough
Ginger	Warming; settles queasiness
Peppermint	Helps congestion feel clearer
Chamomile	Comforting; helps you rest
"Immune boost" blends	No real prevention; enjoy for taste

FAQ

Best tea for a cold? Honey and lemon, or ginger, for comfort while you rest.

Does tea boost immunity? No. "Immune" blends are marketing; nothing in tea prevents colds.

Does tea help you get over a cold faster? It helps you feel better and stay hydrated, but it does not shorten the cold.

When should I see a GP? If symptoms are severe, last more than about three weeks, or you are breathless or have chest pain, get medical advice.

This is general information, not medical advice. Persistent or severe symptoms should be checked by a GP or pharmacist.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Drink what you like, not what the shelf says you should. Curiosity is the only reliable guide.

Sources

- NHS: common cold
- Wikipedia: common cold
- Wikipedia: honey

Cold and flu guides

- Tea for a sore throat
- Tea for a cough
- Tea for a hangover

- Tea for nausea

Related reading

- Ginger tea
- Peppermint tea
- Chamomile tea
- Herbal tea overview

Stock the cupboard for cold season: lemon & ginger, peppermint, or browse the herbal & fruit range and the full tea shop (free UK postage over £35).

Other pillar guides

- Tea for Sleep
- Tea for Digestion
- Tea for Skin and Hair
- Tea Health Benefits
- Best Tea Brands UK

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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