Liquorice Tea Explained: Flavour and Cautions

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Liquorice tea, in summary:** A sweet, aniseed herbal infusion with a documented caution: glycyrrhizin can raise blood pressure and lower potassium, and it hides in many blends.

Of all the herbal infusions in this cluster, liquorice tea is the one with the clearest and most important caution, and one of the most commonly consumed without people realising it, because it hides inside a great many sweet and "tummy" blends.

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

> ***Important:*** *this liquorice page is general information and no substitute for professional advice. Liquorice, like other herbal tisanes, is not true tea and not a treatment. Liquorice is the clearest case of a tisane with real cautions, alongside herbs that clash with medicines or should be avoided in pregnancy. Ask a pharmacist or GP before drinking liquorice regularly while pregnant, on medication or managing a condition.*

What it is and how it tastes

An infusion of liquorice root (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), a legume root that is naturally and intensely sweet. A caffeine-free tisane, not true tea; see what counts as tea. The cup is dominated by a powerful, woody, aniseed like sweetness that needs no sugar, which is exactly why blenders love it: a little liquorice makes a "naturally sweet" caffeine free blend without added sugar, so it turns up in bedtime, after dinner and sweet herbal mixes, often without being named on the front of the pack.

The genuine, important caution

Liquorice root contains glycyrrhizin, which interferes with an enzyme that normally regulates cortisol. The practical result of regular or high intake is that the body holds onto sodium and water and loses potassium, which can raise blood pressure and in significant or prolonged cases disturb mineral balance (sometimes described medically as pseudoaldosteronism). This is a well-documented, specific pharmacological caution, not a vague footnote. Occasional, modest consumption in a healthy adult is a different matter from strong, daily, long-term drinking.

Who must be especially careful

Group	Why it matters
High blood pressure	Glycyrrhizin can raise it further

Group	Why it matters
Heart or kidney conditions	Potassium and fluid effects are higher risk
On certain medication	Including some blood pressure and diuretic drugs
Pregnant or breastfeeding	Regular liquorice is generally advised against

The hidden dose problem

The practical risk is rarely a pot of pure liquorice tea; it is the cumulative, unnoticed intake from blends where liquorice is an ingredient but not the headline name. If you fall into any of the groups above, the useful habit is to read the full ingredient list on herbal blends, not just the name. Note also: aniseed, fennel, and star anise give a similar aniseed character but are different plants and do not contain glycyrrhizin. The caution applies only to real liquorice root (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*). There is also a deglycyrrhizinated form (DGL) from which the glycyrrhizin has been removed; that is a distinct product, not a standard liquorice infusion.

Cautions summary

Occasional, modest cups for a healthy adult: generally fine. Regular or strong intake: the documented risk rises with dose and duration. Anyone in the risk groups above should treat even modest regular intake with care, check blends for liquorice root in the ingredient list, and ask a pharmacist or GP if relevant.

The essentials: liquorice tea

Aspect	Note
What it is	Glycyrrhiza glabra root infusion; naturally intensely sweet
Caffeine	Zero; herbal tisane not true tea
Taste	Powerful woody aniseed sweetness; needs no sugar
Active compound	Glycyrrhizin (raises BP, lowers potassium)
Key caution	Not for regular/strong use if BP, cardiac, renal, pregnant or medicated
Hidden in blends	Common in bedtime, after dinner and fruit blends
DGL	Deglycyrrhizinated form: distinct product, glycyrrhizin removed

Common questions

Is liquorice tea bad for you? Not in occasional, modest amounts for a healthy adult. The documented risk is from regular or heavy intake of glycyrrhizin over time.

Why does it raise blood pressure? Glycyrrhizin disturbs cortisol regulation, causing sodium and water retention and potassium loss, which can push blood pressure up.

Is it caffeine-free? Yes. It is a root infusion, not true tea, so contains no caffeine.

How do I know if a blend contains it? Read the ingredient list, not just the name. Liquorice root is a common sweetener in bedtime, after dinner and sweet fruit blends.

Quick take

Liquorice tea is distinctive and naturally sweet, but it is the herbal that most rewards reading the label: glycyrrhizin raises blood pressure and lowers potassium with regular or heavy intake, and it hides in many everyday blends. Occasional cups, healthy adult, fine. If you are in any of the risk groups, check blends and check with a pharmacist. Explore the herbal range or the full tea shop.

Reference noted

- NHS: Herbal medicines

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