Liquorice Tea: Naturally Sweet, With a Real Caution

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Liquorice tea, in summary:** Liquorice tea is a naturally sweet, caffeine free root infusion with real traditional uses but a real blood pressure caution, so moderation matters.

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

Liquorice tea is the naturally sweet anise flavoured infusion of liquorice root, surprisingly assertive in flavour, traditionally used as a digestive and respiratory aid. The catch: heavy daily liquorice can raise blood pressure (the glycyrrhizin effect), so moderation is important.

The plant

Liquorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*) is a perennial herb native to the Mediterranean, Middle East, and Asia. The dried root contains:

- **Glycyrrhizin.** 50× sweeter than sugar; provides the natural sweetness AND the blood pressure elevation concern.
- **Anethole.** The aniseed flavoured aromatic compound (also in fennel and star anise).
- **Various flavonoids.** Antioxidant load.

What liquorice tea tastes like

Sweet, anise flavoured, with a distinctive earthy depth. The cup is dark amber. Most drinkers find it pleasantly assertive; some find the sweetness cloying.

Traditional uses (with plain evidence)

Sore throat / cough

Demulcent (coats and soothes) effect on the throat. Some clinical evidence for cough relief. A traditional cup for colds.

Digestive support

Liquorice has traditional use for indigestion, gastritis, and ulcer support. Some clinical evidence, particularly for "deglycyrrhizinated liquorice" (DGL), a modified form without the blood pressure concern.

Adrenal support

Some traditional use as "adrenal tonic", modest evidence at best. Not a clinical category.

antioxidant

Glycyrrhizin shows this activity in lab (in vitro) studies. Tea strength is gentle.

The blood pressure concern

Heavy daily liquorice consumption (multiple cups daily over weeks) can elevate blood pressure through the glycyrrhizin cortisol sodium retention pathway. Specifically:

- Glycyrrhizin inhibits the enzyme that normally deactivates cortisol
- Active cortisol levels rise
- Sodium retention increases
- Blood pressure rises
- Potassium depletion can occur

Effect is dose dependent. 1 cup of liquorice tea daily is fine for most adults. Multiple cups daily for weeks can produce measurable blood pressure changes.

EFSA recommendations

The European Food Safety Authority recommends not exceeding 100mg glycyrrhizin per day for sustained use. A typical cup of liquorice tea contains 5-30mg glycyrrhizin. So:

- 1-2 cups daily: well within limits
- 3-5 cups daily: approaching the upper threshold
- 6+ cups daily: exceeds recommended sustained intake

Who should avoid heavy liquorice

- **People with hypertension.** Even moderate liquorice can amplify blood pressure issues.
- **People on blood pressure medication.** Discuss with GP before regular liquorice consumption.
- **People with heart conditions.** Discuss with cardiologist.
- **Pregnant women.** Heavy liquorice is contraindicated in pregnancy.
- **People on diuretics.** Possible additive electrolyte effects.
- **Anyone with kidney conditions.**

How to brew

1. 1 bag (or 1 tsp loose root pieces) per 200ml.

2. Just boiled water.
3. Steep 5-7 minutes.
4. Drink black, natural sweetness is sufficient.
5. Optional: add lemon to balance the sweetness.

Liquorice in tea blends

Liquorice is often used as a sweetening element in herbal blends:

- **Pukka After Dinner.** Cardamom + fennel + ginger + liquorice.
- **Pukka's aniseed and fennel everyday blend.** Aniseed + fennel + cardamom + liquorice + dandelion.
- **Yogi Egyptian Liquorice.** A blend led by liquorice.
- **Twinings Liquorice & Peppermint.** Mainstream blend.
- **Many teas sold for sore throats include liquorice.**

Trace amounts in blended teas are well below the EFSA threshold. Concentrated liquorice teas (where liquorice is the dominant or sole ingredient) are where the blood pressure concern matters.

Caffeine

0mg. Pure liquorice tea is caffeine free.

Use cases

- **Sore throat.** Traditional demulcent action.
- **After heavy meals.** Mild digestive support.
- **Sweet caffeine free evening drink.** Naturally sweet without sugar.
- **For people who like aniseed flavour.** Same flavour family as fennel, star anise, ouzo.

Cautions summary

- Limit to 1-2 cups daily for sustained use.
- Avoid if hypertension, heart, or kidney conditions.
- Avoid in pregnancy.
- Discuss with GP if on blood pressure medication or diuretics.

FAQ

Is liquorice tea worth drinking? In moderation, yes: a gentle after meal and sore throat cup. Heavy daily intake has blood pressure concerns.

How many cups can I drink? 1-2 cups daily is fine for most adults. More than 5 cups daily risks blood pressure effects.

Pregnancy safe? No, avoid heavy liquorice in pregnancy. Trace amounts in blends are generally fine.

Caffeine free? Yes.

Best liquorice tea UK? Pukka After Dinner (small liquorice content in a digestive blend); Yogi Egyptian Liquorice (liquorice led).

Curator's note: in moderation liquorice tea is a useful cup: sweet, gentle and caffeine free. The "moderation" word matters more than usual because of the blood pressure issue. 1 cup occasionally is fine; daily multiple cups isn't. Lee, teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.

In short: liquorice (EFSA limits)

Daily intake	Verdict
1-2 cups	Well within limits for most adults
3-5 cups	Approaching the upper threshold
6+ cups	Exceeds recommended sustained intake
Pregnancy / hypertension	Avoid heavy use
Want it daily?	Use DGL or a low-liquorice blend

This is general information, not medical advice. If you have high blood pressure, a heart or kidney condition, are pregnant, or take blood-pressure medication or diuretics, check with your GP before drinking liquorice regularly.

Teas that travel well with this article: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. Shop the tea range at teas.co.uk, liquorice blends included, with free UK delivery past £35.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · Sweet as it is, judge liquorice tea on price per cup. Loose liquorice root often wins that test, though bags sometimes match it.

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