

# Health properties of Yerba Mate

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PMID: 32588612

DOI: [10.26444/aaem/119994](https://doi.org/10.26444/aaem/119994)

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Yerba Mate, also called Paraguay tea, is obtained from the dried leaves (approximately 95%) and stems (about 5%) of the evergreen shrub-tree *Ilex paraguariensis*. Each year, the consumption of yerba mate becomes increasingly popular in North America and Europe. The fashion for Paraguay tea has also reached Poland. During the period 2012 - 2018, as much as an 8-fold increase has been observed in the import of this raw material to our country.

**Objective:** The aim of the study is analysis of the present state of knowledge concerning the health effects of Yerba Mate, based on selected scientific literature.

**Discussion:** The consumption of yerba mate may exert a beneficial effect on human health and its consumption is recommended in the treatment of obesity and while practicing sports. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that a very high consumption of the tea, especially when very hot, may increase the risk of occurrence of cancer, which has not been unequivocally confirmed by scientific studies to-date.

**Conclusions:** It has been confirmed that this beverage shows a number of beneficial health effects, including: a protective effect on liver cells, stimulation of the central nervous system, anti-inflammatory effect, as well as a positive effect on the cardiovascular system.

**Keywords:** *Ilex paraguariensis*; Yerba mate; medicinal effects (health implications); tea.



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10 health benefits of yerba mate

See how the South American tea can boost energy, facilitate weight loss, and more

By Heidi Borst | Aug. 9, 2023

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## 10 health benefits of yerba mate

### 1. Provides nutrients

Yerba mate [contains](#) a decent amount of vitamin C: 100 grams of dried yerba mate leaves have 22 mg of vitamin C, about 30% of the [recommended daily value \(RDV\)](#) for women and 25% of the RDV for men. The tea has lesser amounts of vitamins B6, thiamine (B1), and riboflavin (B2). There are also small amounts of vitamins A and E as well as the minerals [potassium](#), [calcium](#), [magnesium](#), [manganese](#), phosphorus, and iron, says Kulp.

Since yerba mate contains small amounts of vitamins and minerals [essential](#) to normal body function, pairing it with a wide variety of healthy, whole foods in your [diet](#) is best.

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### 2. Increases energy

Yerba mate's energy-boosting effects come from xanthine alkaloids: [caffeine](#), theobromine, and [theophylline](#), explains Kulp. These chemicals [stimulate](#) the central nervous system, making you feel more awake and energetic. However, any food or beverage containing caffeine (like a cup of coffee or an energy drink) will have a similar effect.

Anecdotal evidence suggests yerba mate won't make you feel jittery like other forms of caffeine, but no studies back up this claim.

### 3. Improves focus

The caffeine in yerba mate may increase focus and concentration, says Kulp. But the data isn't conclusive.

One [study](#) found that low to moderate caffeine intake (40 to 300 mg) increased alertness, attention, and reaction time but did not improve memory, judgment, or decision-making. Further [research](#) found that while

caffeine impacts receptors in the brain responsible for memory, alertness, and cognitive function—and enhances processing speed—it does not significantly impact how well you can pay attention.

#### 4. Rich in antioxidants

This unique tea contains a variety of antioxidants, like polyphenols, that support the immune system, says Kulp. [Research](#) shows the antioxidant properties of polyphenols reduce systemic inflammation and insulin resistance and improve blood pressure and lipid profiles.

Polyphenols can [reduce free radicals](#) and [oxidation](#), which causes cellular DNA changes that can result in the formation of cancer cells. They also support the gut microbiome, leading to improved overall health, and may prevent chronic health conditions like diabetes.

#### 5. Supports cardiovascular health

Your body [requires omega-3](#) and omega-6 [fatty acids](#) to function, but it can't make its own. You must get them directly from [foods](#) like leafy greens, flax seed, vegetable oil, walnuts, and fish.

Yerba mate [has](#) omega-3 and omega-6 in heart-healthy linoleic acid (LA), an omega-6 fatty acid, and alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), an omega-3 fatty acid, Kulp says. A [2019 research analysis](#) associated high levels of omega-6 with a reduced risk of heart disease, stroke, and death. And a 2019 [meta-analysis](#) linked fish oil-based omega-3 supplements with a reduced risk of heart attack and death from heart disease.

The tea may also improve cholesterol levels. One [study](#) found that women who were overweight and supplemented with yerba mate every day for 12 weeks—along with a reduced calorie food plan—experienced a reduction in total cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, and triglycerides.

#### 6. Improves digestion

Proponents claim you can use yerba mate as a digestive aid, but no scientific research supports this benefit. Even so, beverages containing caffeine [stimulate](#) gut motility to expedite movement through the digestive tract. According to one [study](#), caffeine-containing drinks promote gastric acid secretion, which aids digestion, by activating bitter taste receptors called TAS2Rs in the mouth and stomach.

## 7. Reduces fluid retention

No scientific evidence supports claims that yerba mate tea detoxes the body. However, the caffeine, theobromine, and theophylline in the tea [have mild diuretic properties](#). In other words, these substances may reduce fluid retention by ridding the body of excess salt and water. Because of this diuretic effect, drink plenty of [water](#) with your yerba mate, especially when consuming several cups.

## 8. Improves physical performance

According to Kulp, the phenolic compounds in yerba mate may improve endurance and decrease muscle damage from exercise. A recent research [review](#) found that phenolic compounds (which suppress inflammation) reduced muscle soreness and increased the rate of post-exercise recovery. And a [study](#) of 11 male cyclists found that yerba mate increased fat utilization and endurance during exercise.

## 9. Helps with weight loss

According to a 2019 [meta-analysis](#), yerba mate can potentially prevent obesity in individuals. The review of clinical trials linked consuming the tea with reduced body weight, BMI, waist circumference, and belly fat. It noted these effects could be related to the high caffeine content of the tea.

In a [study](#) on mice, yerba mate reduced appetite and the rate of weight gain. It also increased how fast the mice burned fat, says Kulp, leading to a reduced risk of obesity. In a placebo-controlled human [study](#) with individuals who were obese, they were given oral yerba mate supplements for 12 weeks. Those who took three capsules each day (one per meal) experienced significantly reduced body fat and weight circumference compared to the group who got the placebo.

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## 10. Boosts mental health

There's little evidence to support claims that yerba mate improves your mood, reduces instances of depression, or relieves anxiety. One [study](#) of Syrian students found an inverse relationship between yerba mate consumption and the risk of depression, but further research is needed to corroborate this data. It's also worth noting that high caffeine doses may [worsen](#) anxiety symptoms.

