

Hibiscus tea may be perfect remedy after stressful day



Although flowering plants are beautiful, nature is famous for multitasking and so many of these also have potent medicinal properties.

The hibiscus is one example. Medical research indicates that hibiscus tea may be effective in the treatment of mild to moderately high blood pressure.

Hibiscus is actually a large group of plants, shrubs and small trees that usually are found in the tropical or subtropical parts of the world. Although often grown for the lovely flowers, it is also a main component of many herbal teas.

Some cultures also use it as an antibiotic, antifungal and anticancer agent and as a contraceptive. The bark of the tree is used to make the "grass" skirts indigenous to Polynesia.

The results of a 2004 clinical trial, published in the medical journal *Phytomedicine*, compared the effects of a standardized tea preparation of *Hibiscus sabdariffa* to the potent prescription medication captopril on mild high blood pressure. For this study, participants took either the hibiscus tea or captopril daily for 4 weeks. The data showed that the hibiscus tea preparation was as effective as captopril in reducing blood pressure.

In an earlier trial, published in the journal of *Ethnopharmacology* (1999), hibiscus tea significantly reduced blood pressure for those with moderate hypertension.

Similar reductions in blood pressure were noted when hibiscus tea was consumed by diabetics with high blood pressure. This study, reported in 2008 in the *Journal of Human Hypertension*, compared hibiscus tea with black tea. Sixty non-insulin dependent diabetics were randomly assigned to drink either hibiscus or black tea twice a day for one month. Blood pressure was measured at the beginning, middle and end of the 30-day clinical trial. As anticipated, there was a significant reduction in blood pressure in the hibiscus tea group. However, in the black tea group, blood pressure actually increased slightly, possibly reflecting the effect of its caffeine content.

Hibiscus tea is considered to be very safe. Its mode of action may be as a potent diuretic or "water pill." It has few interactions with medications; however, enthusiastic hibiscus tea consumption could cause hypotension if already taking one or more high blood pressure medications. It also has reported antifertility effects and, in one study, was effective against head lice. Nevertheless, I strongly do not recommend hibiscus tea as a form of contraception and much prefer medication-based therapies for head lice.

All in all it appears that drinking a little hibiscus tea, after a nerve-racking day, may be both relaxing and help lower stress-induced high blood pressure - and, in today's world, I am sure we all can use a little more of that.

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