



**STRICTLY EMBARGOED FOR PUBLICATION OR BROADCAST
UNTIL 00:01 GMT ON WEDNESDAY, 8 APRIL 2009**

NEW RESEARCH SUGGESTS DRINKING AS LITTLE AS ONE CUP OF BLACK TEA PER DAY CAN HELP PROTECT AGAINST CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

New research reveals that drinking just one cup of regular, black tea per day may help to protect against cardiovascular disease.

The research, conducted at the University of L'Aquila in Italy and supported by the Lipton Institute of Tea, is the first study to show that black tea consumption does – depending on dose – improve blood vessel reactivity, reduce both blood pressure and arterial stiffness, indicating a notably better cardiovascular health profile.

Using a cohort of 19 healthy men (mean age 33), the researchers assigned participants to one of five prescribed intakes of black tea over five periods lasting one week each. The caffeine level of each dose was standardized but the dose of tea flavonoids was controlled at levels of 0 (the control dose), 100, 200, 400 and 800 mg of tea flavonoids per day. A standard cup of black tea contains approximately 100-200 mg of flavonoids, depending on the individual preference of tea making. During the course of the research, participants avoided naturally flavonoid-rich food and drink such as red wine and chocolate to ensure that the results were a true reflection of flavonoid-rich black tea consumption only.

Professor Claudio Ferri, the principle investigator of the study and one of the lead researchers in this field, explained: “Our study demonstrates that commercially available black tea can affect vascular function in normal individuals. We clearly demonstrated that vascular function improvement exerted by black tea starts with one cup per day and further improves by increasing the number of daily cups of tea.

“We used the gold standard technique to assess the dilation of the brachial artery in response to black tea and observed a significant improvement in arterial dilation. Simultaneously, we also observed that black tea consumption lowered blood pressure and reduced arterial rigidity, thereby improving the elastic capacity of the blood vessels.

“Protection of vascular properties, starting with drinking even a single cup of regular, black tea, suggests that black tea can exert cardiovascular benefits in common tea drinkers.”

Dr Paul Quinlan, Research Director at the Lipton Institute of Tea, added: “In recent years, a growing volume of scientific research has pointed to there being significant mental and physical health benefits to be gained from regular tea consumption. This new study takes this one step further; demonstrating that tea flavonoids play a role in maintaining healthy blood vessel function, which in turn can contribute to cardiovascular health. This adds to recent evidence that



regular tea-drinkers have a lower risk of heart disease, and can have as much as a 21 per cent reduced risk of stroke.

“We are delighted to have helped fund this study and helped further our understanding of the role of tea in physical wellbeing – and particularly in maintaining good cardiovascular health.”

Tea is the second most consumed drink in the world after water, and is a major source of dietary flavonoid intake in Western countries and in the Middle and Far East. The benefits to cardiovascular health that this study reveals are therefore relevant to millions of tea-drinkers globally.

A full copy of the research, *Black tea consumption dose-dependently improved flow-mediated dilation in healthy males*, will be published in *The Journal of Hypertension* in April 2009.

- ENDS -

Media information

More information on this research, including a copy of the original research paper, and details on the Lipton Institute of Tea can be obtained by contacting Lucy Hensher at salt on +44-20-8875-2696 / lucyh@saltlondon.com.

Notes to editors

The Lipton Institute of Tea is Unilever’s dedicated tea research facility, headquartered at Sharnbrook, just outside London in the UK. It is entirely Unilever funded, and works with both its own in-house experts and external tea researchers to uncover new physical and mental health properties pertaining to tea.

The Lipton Institute of Tea publishes regular academic papers, aimed at uncovering and sharing the physical and mental health benefits of tea. It is responsible for publishing *The Lipton Institute of Tea Quarterly Tea Science Review*, a quarterly overview of key tea science research developments from both internal and external sources and compiled to share recent studies and findings to a broader, non-specialist audience.

The Lipton Institute of Tea also operates the world’s most northerly tea ‘plantation’ at its Sharnbrook headquarters. This facility enables tea to be studied in a controlled environment, as representative samples of tea from around the world are grown. Here, the journey from bush to cup – through drying and processing – can be very much shorter than usual.

More information on the Lipton Institute of Tea can be found at: www.liptoninstituteoftea.org