Drinking tea helps prevent dementia: NUS study

An apple a day may keep the doctors away but tea could stave off dementia, a National University of Singapore study has found.

Regular tea drinkers are less likely to get dementia compared with those who do not drink tea at all, and all that is needed is around 200ml, or the average kopitiam cuppa, once a day.

Tea can also help those whose genetics predispose them to getting Alzheimer's disease — the most common form of dementia — keep the disease at bay.

Whether the tea is green, black or oolong makes no difference, said Assistant Professor Feng Lei, who conducted the study.

The results, published last year, apply only to tea brewed with leaves from the tea plant — formally known as camellia sinensis — and not to fruit or flower teas.

Adding milk to tea will reduce the absorption of one of the chemicals called catechin.

Prof Feng, who is from the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine's psychological medicine department, studied nearly 1,000 Singaporean Chinese seniors from 2003 to 2010. Although the study was conducted among the Chinese, its results should apply to other ethnicities, Prof Feng said.

Dementia affects an estimated one in 10 people aged over 60 in Singapore, where the population of people 65 and over is expected to double to 900,000 by 2030.

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