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Kombucha: A Drink For Your Health?



Would you spend a few bucks for an elixir that can reportedly give you a good night's sleep, aid in weight loss, promote hair growth, and even prevent cancer? Celebrities like Madonna, Gwyneth Paltrow, and Halle Berry reportedly make this so-called fountain of youth part of their high-profile lives, but what is kombucha anyway?

This fermented tea may be hot now, but it's not exactly new. Made by fermenting black tea with a thick, mushroom-like culture of yeasts and bacteria, kombucha is said to have [originated in ancient China](#) and has been savored for centuries to (supposedly) keep the body healthy.

Nutritionist **Franci Cohen** says to think twice before consuming kombucha daily.

"I would not recommend kombucha to clients," explains Cohen. "The main drawback is how bacteria can be so easily introduced, thereby contaminating the beverage and inviting a host of unwanted ailments to the drinker. If you are buying prepared kombucha, make sure it's pasteurized, which kills the cultures. If you want to prepare it yourself, make sure your utensils are clean to avoid bacteria from contaminating your drink."

Cohen also points out that kombucha contains 0.5% of alcohol and if it sits too long, the percentage can go up as it continues to ferment.

"As this fermentation continues, the tea's health benefits diminish and harmful side effects can occur from drinking," she adds. "Steer clear of this mysterious drink that lacks any solid scientific credit."

Those hoping kombucha can help reach weight-loss goals may also want to look carefully at labels. Medical experts say that some brands that have sweetened flavors to mask the "sour" and "vinegar-like" taste of kombucha can pack on the pounds.

Want to give kombucha a try? It's recommended to first **seek the advice of a doctor** to ensure the tea won't cause any potential health complications. And while buying a prepared, bottled version is always a safer option than attempting to brew at home, it's also important to understand what it *cannot* achieve.