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Tea and herbal infusions consumption in Portugal: consumer behaviors

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Abstract

Background: Tea and herbal infusions (THIs) consumption is recognized for its beneficial effects, which are attributed to the antioxidant properties of phenolic compounds [1–3]. The wide diversity of THIs available in market and the absence or failure in quality control can expose the population to health risks [3]. Moreover, uncontrolled consumption may cause toxicity or lack of the expected benefits. Therefore, an understanding of the THIs consumption and consumer habits will allow adjustments in risk-benefit assessment for vulnerable population. **Objective:** The main aim was to understand THI consumption in Portugal. **Methods:** A web-based survey was developed and applied (January-February 2023), using Google forms® platform, after the Ethical Committee approval. Sociodemographic data, type of THIs consumed and brewing were collected. Descriptive statistics was performed using JASP 0.16.1.0. **Results:** A total of 720 participants completed the online survey, of which 47.2% declared drinking THIs ≥ 2 cups/week (medium consumers) and 17.8% consumed ≥ 2 cups/day (heavy consumers). In the latter, the majority were female (87.5%), of which 51.8% aged 40-60 years. In heavy THI consumers group, 10% were older than 61 years. Among the heavy and medium consumers, herbal infusions, such as citronella (42.1%) and chamomile (35.7%), were most popular than green tea consumption (22.3%). For THI preparation, mostly of these consumers reported the use of tap water (82%) and bags (56%), but 41% reported the use either bags or leaves. Over 16% of heavy and medium consumers use more product quantity than recommended. Approximately 86% of the heavy and medium consumers indicated that, after boiling, let THIs rest for 5-10 minutes and, 78% removed bag/leave before drinking. **Conclusions:** Herbal infusions consumption was more frequent than green tea and heavy consumers were mainly older adults. This study contributes with relevant results for future risk-benefit assessments of THIs consumption available in the Portuguese market.

Keywords: tea and infusions consumption; web-based survey; consumer choice; beverages preparation

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