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Green tea helps inhibit AIDS
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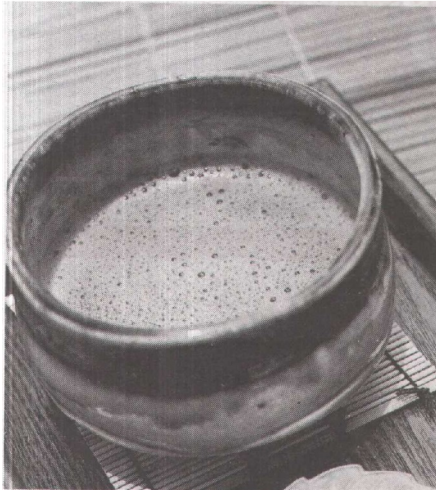
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Green tea helps inhibit AIDS



A CHEMICAL found in green tea helps inhibit sexual transmission of the virus which causes AIDS, revealed a study that recommends using the compound in vaginal creams to supplement antiretrovirals.



Green tea is both antioxidant and anti-HIV.

Medical experts at Germany's University of Heidelberg said the compound could be a low-cost arrow in the quiver of medical weapons to fight the spread of HIV in research-poor countries.

The researchers said they determined that the green tea polyphenol, or vegetable tannin, called epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG), is capable of neutralising a protein in sperm which serves as a vector for viral transmission during sex.

With the vast majority of the world's HIV population infected through heterosexual sex, and as 96 per cent of new infections occur in poor and developing nations, researchers said the use of green tea EGCG in topical creams would "provide a simple and affordable prevention method" to guard against HIV transmission.

Green tea, which originated in China and is widely consumed in Asia, the Middle East and growing numbers of Western countries, is already popular for its antioxidant qualities — AFP

■ **Daycare and stressed children**
A NEW study shows that very young children who spend lots of time in centre-based childcare or have a relatively insensitive primary caregiver show changes in the body's stress response system that last well into adolescence.

The effects were modest, and should not alarm parents with kids in daycare, said Dr Glenn I. Roisman of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

"This work doesn't suggest that having experienced insensitivity in the first three years of life or having experienced centre-based care is going to ruin a child by any means," he said.

Nevertheless, he added, the effects do seem to be real.

Roisman and his team looked at a subset of 863 children taking part in the National Institute of Child

Health and Development's Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development, which has followed 1,364 kids from one month of age through 15 years.

The researchers looked at how parenting and childcare quality, as well as the amount of time kids spent in daycare, up until the children were three-years-old related to their cortisol levels at age 15 upon awakening.

Roisman and his team found a small but strong association between being exposed to insensitive caregiving and low cortisol levels. And the more time a child had spent in centre-based care, the more likely he or she was to have low cortisol levels.

However, childcare quality had no impact on cortisol levels — Reuters

■ **Vitamin D boost for the brain**
HIGHER levels of Vitamin D, synthesised in the skin after being exposed to the sun and found in oily fish, are associated with increased brain power among middle-aged men, according to a new British study.

The link between increased Vitamin D and faster information processing "was

more significant in men aged over 60-years-old, although the biological reasons for this remain unclear," said the report, to appear in the *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry*.

The study compared the cognitive performance of more than 3,000 men between the ages of 40 and 79 years.

Men with higher levels of Vitamin D "performed consistently better in a simple and sensitive neuropsychological test that assesses an individual's attention and speed of information processing," the study showed.

The study is based on a large population sample and took into account other possible factors, such as depression, season and levels of physical activity.

The main source of Vitamin D is 10 to 15 minutes of daily exposure to sunlight. Oily fish are also an excellent source of Vitamin D.

A separate study last year by researchers in Amsterdam showed that a lack of this vitamin could increase the risk of depression or other psychiatric problems among older people — AFP