

## **Interview with Dr Karen Bridgman**

### **1. What are the advantages of drinking Rooibos Tea?**

Rooibos tea has many health advantages. It was traditionally used for treating abdominal colic (wind pain), diarrhoea and vomiting, anaemia, eczema and asthma, inflammation, nervous tension and allergies. It also helped in the management of blood sugar and skin conditions such as abscesses, boils and sores were treated by external application. In addition, it is also cleansing and revitalising and helps induce a sound refreshing sleep.

### **2. What are the benefits of antioxidants on the body?**

The process of oxidation in the body is the production of free radicals that start chain reactions that damage cells. As we age, this damage accumulates and contributes to the development of chronic degenerative diseases such as heart and cardiovascular disease, diabetes, arthritis, cancer, chronic pain etc. Antioxidants are very important to include regularly in the diet as they neutralise the free radicals that damage the cells and therefore play a role in prevention of these degenerative conditions.

### **3. How many glasses of Rooibos Tea do we need to consume to see positive results?**

The amount of Rooibos to drink per day to gain the health benefits would be 3 -4 cups. This would need to be drunk regularly over long periods of time to have the long term beneficial effects. However this is easy to do, as just swapping your normal cup of tea with Rooibos works well. As there is little or no toxicity for Rooibos, twice this amount could be drunk with no adverse effects. As Rooibos does not contain any caffeine, it would also be less stimulating and more beneficial than tea drinking. It can also be drunk at night to help with sleep.

### **4. How does red tea assist in prolonging and preventing ageing?**

Aging is the process of accumulated damage caused by increasing oxidation. Rooibos therefore assists in improving health as we age due to its high antioxidant content. Many of the degenerative diseases associated with aging are caused by a combination of excess accumulated oxidation and inflammation. The strong anti-inflammatory (and antioxidant) properties of Rooibos tea therefore assist in the prevention of these conditions, so we can reduce the more detrimental effects of the aging process.

### **5. What diseases does drinking Rooibos Tea assist in preventing?**

Rooibos tea will improve digestion and liver function, it is calming so will help reduce nervous tension and anxiety and help with getting a good night's sleep. Its anti-inflammatory properties will reduce the inflammation caused by allergies and it helps repair and maintain healthy skin. It will also reduce cramps and spasms and improves immunity. Rooibos also has antiviral activity against various viruses including the herpes virus. Combined with a healthy diet and regular exercises, drinking Rooibos may regularly assist in the prevention of the common conditions mentioned above as well as the chronic degenerative diseases associated with the aging process.

### **6. How can Rooibos Tea keep our skin healthy?**

Rooibos tea, both drunk regularly and used topically is an excellent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory for the skin. As such it assists in reducing the symptoms of inflammatory skin diseases such as eczema and itchy skin. The antioxidant properties prevent damage due to sun exposure and will assist in the prevention of the brown 'liver spots' caused by oxidation in the liver leaving residual brown spots in the connective tissue under the skin – a common sign of aging and excess sun exposure.

### **7. Why is Rooibos Tea been titled 'Nature's most powerful antioxidant drink'?**

Rooibos tea has the ability to stimulate the activity of an antioxidant called SOD (superoxide dismutase) that is not present in many foods. SOD is one of two major antioxidants in the body. Rooibos also increases the other major antioxidant compound in the body – glutathione. These antioxidants together will help protect damage to DNA in our cells so play a large role in protecting us against a range of disease, particularly the diseases associated with aging. Rooibos has at least the equivalent amounts of

antioxidants as does green tea, but without the caffeine, so can be drunk at all times of the day and evening.

#### **8. What are the benefits of drinking Rooibos Tea / red tea over green or black tea?**

There has been research comparing the antioxidant properties of Rooibos tea compared with green and black tea, and Rooibos was shown to have at least the equal amount of antioxidants as green tea. Black tea generally has less antioxidants as the process of fermentation that makes black tea, also destroys some of its antioxidant components. As such the important antioxidants are available in Rooibos tea with the added benefit of not containing the stimulant – caffeine - so it can be drunk in the evening to produce a good night's sleep. Rooibos also has lower levels of tannins than green tea so will not reduce iron absorption and its active ingredients also have a powerful anti-inflammatory effect. It tastes delightful as well and can be drunk hot or cold and with milk and sugar in the same way as 'normal' tea.

#### **9. Why is Rooibos such a great health booster?**

Rooibos Tea delivers one of the richest sources of antioxidants to help to fight free radicals and give your health a boost from the inside-out.

#### **10. What's one useful health item everyone should keep in their cupboard?**

Rooibos Tea, of course. It effectively gives you your daily dose of antioxidants all in the one cup and has been been tried and tested throughout the ages to treat a variety of health ailments from eczema, infantile colic as well as aiding a healthy digestion and improving liver function.

#### **11. What are some natural ways / tips / tricks to survive the party season if you're feeling...**

##### **Low energy**

If a person is low in energy because they are Anaemic, Rooibos will actually help improve iron absorption and therefore energy if this is the problem. If sleeping poorly is a cause of the lack of energy, Rooibos can also help here as it is calming to the central nervous system and improves sleep quality.

##### **Hungover**

Hangovers need lots of fluid replacement and what better way than by drinking Rooibos tea. You will have added benefits in that Rooibos helps with digestion and improves the liver as well as calming the nervous system. A good sleep will also help you get over the hangover faster.

A hangover is actually a mild case of inflammation of the liver (and brain) (in fact - alcohol induced hepatitis). This partly occurs when the liver attempts to metabolise the alcohol, as free radicals are formed that trigger the inflammatory process in the liver. The anti-inflammatory properties and antioxidant properties of Rooibos will help reduce this activity and therefore the symptoms (and the damage).

Rooibos also enhances the phase 2 chemical detoxification of the liver so will help remove the toxic byproducts of alcohol (eg acetaldehyde) more quickly. It is often the acetaldehyde that affects the brain and makes us feel so lousy. Rooibos helps replace some of the nutrients that will help metabolise the alcohol more effectively - Zinc and Magnesium for example.

##### **Coming down with something**

While Rooibos not specifically antimicrobial, one of the ways the body helps to heal is by restful sleep and it is in this way that Rooibos can help.

The flavonoid content (rutin and quercetin especially) will also help reduce the inflammatory process generated by bacteria and viruses. It is this that causes the aches and pains and the sore chests and is how the organisms break down tissue to get a foothold. These components of Rooibos also help the absorption and utilisation of Vitamin C so taking extra doses of Vitamin C with Rooibos tea will assist the activity of Vitamin C to improve immunity. Zinc is also an important nutrient in improving immunity and both Zinc and Vitamin C reduce the ability of viruses to reproduce thus assisting in the prevention of the growth and spread of the organism.

##### **Sleep deprived**

Rooibos tea improves sleep quality but you will still need to get enough of it (sleep that is). Rooibos is relaxing and will help you get to sleep more easily and sleep more deeply. For another refreshing tip, have a cup of Rooibos tea and place the used teabags over your eyes for a few minutes, making you feel more refreshed. It is a great restorative.

**Bloated**

The digestive properties of Rooibos can help to reduce bloating. One of the traditional uses was for colic and digestive problems in babies and children. It is also a very safe way to improve uncomfortable digestive symptoms.

**Sunburned**

Rooibos tea as a bath (or a wash) can help to relieve the inflammation associated with sunburn. The antioxidant properties will also help reduce the risk of long term damage to the skin - if used both internally as a tea and topically as a wash.