Rooibos

Common name: Bushman tea, Red bush tea

Botanical name: Aspalathus linearis

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Parts used and where grown
Rooibos is a nitrogen-fixing shrub native to South Africa. Its leaves are fermented and sun dried for use as a tea.

Rooibos has been used in connection with the following conditions (refer to the individual health concern for complete information):

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Science Ratings</th>
<th>Health Concerns</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>★★★</td>
<td>Allergies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anti-aging</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cancer prevention</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Indigestion</td>
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Reliable and relatively consistent scientific data showing a substantial health benefit.
Contradictory, insufficient, or preliminary studies suggesting a health benefit or minimal health benefit.
For an herb, supported by traditional use but minimal or no scientific evidence. For a supplement, little scientific support and/or minimal health benefit.

Historical or traditional use (may or may not be supported by scientific studies)
Rooibos is a pleasant-tasting beverage that has been used traditionally to soothe digestion and relieve stomach cramps, colic, and diarrhea. Rooibos tea has also been used to relieve allergies and eczema, and to slow aging.

Active constituents
Rooibos is completely caffeine free and, unlike black tea (Camellia sinensis), does not contain tannins that may interfere with iron absorption. Rooibos is rich in flavonoids, polyphenols, and phenolic acids (including aspalathin, (+)-catechin, isoquercitrin, luteolin, quercetin, rutin, caffeic acid, ferulic acid, and vanillic acid). The polyphenol aspalathin is unique to rooibos. The plant also contains oligosaccharides, polysaccharides, and a variety of minerals, though at levels that are of questionable clinical relevance.¹

Preliminary studies show that rooibos has antimutagenic and antioxidant properties.²³⁴⁵ It has also shown some ability to prevent radiation damage in animals.⁶⁷⁸ This research somewhat supports rooibos’s traditional use to slow the aging process, and its modern use as a cancer preventative. Laboratory and animal studies indicate that it affects antibody production and has anti-HIV activity.⁹¹⁰¹¹ These studies raise the possibility that the herb could
be useful in aiding deficient immune responses in allergies, AIDS, and infections. No clinical trials have yet been published on this herb, however, so its efficacy is still unknown.

**How much is usually taken?**
A tea can be made by steeping 1 to 4 teaspoons (5 to 20 grams) of rooibos in 1 cup (240 ml) of water for up to ten minutes. Three cups of this tea per day may be drunk, with or without food.\(^\text{12}\)

**Are there any side effects or interactions?**
As rooibos has not been studied scientifically in humans, there is no information available about its safety in pregnancy or lactation or in people with kidney or liver failure. However, it is generally considered a very safe herb, and there are no known side effects, contraindications, or drug interactions.\(^\text{13}\)

At the time of writing, there were no well-known drug interactions with Rooibos.

**References**
*(To view, roll mouse over the "References" heading; to hide, click on the heading)*


