

Scoping paper on the potential risks of chemicals (other than caffeine) found in green and black tea in the maternal diet

Background

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This is a paper for discussion. It does not reflect the views of the Committee and should not be cited.

1. The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) last considered the maternal diet and nutrition in relation to offspring health in its reports on 'The influence of maternal, foetal and child nutrition on the development of chronic disease in later life' (SACN, 2011) and on 'Feeding in the first year of life' (SACN, 2018). In the latter report, the impact of breastfeeding on maternal health was also considered.
2. In 2019, SACN agreed to conduct a risk assessment on nutrition and maternal health, focusing on maternal outcomes during pregnancy, childbirth and up to 24 months after delivery. SACN agreed that, where appropriate, other expert Committees would be consulted and asked to complete relevant risk assessments. A provisional list of chemicals was proposed by SACN Members. However, this was subject to change following discussion by the Committee on

the Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COT). A scoping paper ([TOX/2020/32](#)) was presented to the COT in July 2020 to define the scope of the work from a toxicological safety perspective and also requested their input on the selection of candidate chemicals or chemical classes that could be added or removed.

3. This list was brought back to the COT meeting in September 2020 ([TOX/2020/45](#)). It was agreed that papers on a number of components should be prioritised, including a scoping paper on the potential toxic effects of chemicals (other than caffeine) found in green and black tea in the maternal diet.
4. The COT previously published statements on the reproductive effects of caffeine in 2001 (COT, 2001) and in 2008 (COT, 2008a) and will revisit the potential adverse effects of caffeine as part of the wider SACN work on nutrition and maternal health. As such, caffeine has not been included in the scope of chemical compounds reviewed in this paper. Statements on the potential health effects of raspberry leaf tea in the maternal diet (COT, 2024a) and the hepatotoxicity of green tea catechins (COT, 2024b) have been published in 2024. The COT are also preparing a statement on the potential health effects of Echinacea in the maternal diet ([TOX/2025/45](#)). Peppermint, camomile and dandelion teas are on the list for potential consideration.

5. The aim of this scoping paper is to provide an overview of chemical compounds which may be present in tea and have the potential to result in a health risk for woman of childbearing age. Please note, two types of tea have been considered in this scoping paper, green and black tea. While other tea is consumed in the United Kingdom (UK), these are the most common teas, and for the purpose of this scoping paper, it can be assumed that any compounds present in these two types of tea, would also be present in other types.