



Anxiety & L Theanine?

by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

Q: Have you heard about L-Theanine, also found in green tea? I hear it's an amino acid used to treat anxiety. I've heard great things but I don't know anyone who has used it. What are your thoughts?

A: I'm glad you are willing to do a little research to be sure you stay safe and healthy. While I use, and benefit from, certain over the counter herbs and nutritional supplements myself, I do so only with sound medical advice from both my physician and a certified master herbalist who is extremely knowledgeable about herbal preparations, brands...and me.

I don't know anyone who's using L-Theanine in supplement form, personally. I have read some positive (albeit unsubstantiated) blurbs that unlike Kava-Kava, Valerian and St. John's Wort, it's said not to cause drowsiness. Some articles say there are no *known* adverse reactions, yet others say it is strongly contraindicated with antidepressants, sedatives or recreational drugs. As you might imagine, there could be a significant crossover population being treated for depression, but also self-medicating for anxiety, or drinking alcohol socially or otherwise.

I did a very quick search on the Internet for you. Website where I found L-Theanine were largely promoting products, so these could not be assumed to present an unbiased perspective. It does not appear to be strongly recommended on the highly credible, mainstream medical sites, or even progressive "ahead of the curve" sites. So, not to say it is not a useful preparation---but I'd say it's too soon to ensure efficacy or safety, if it isn't even on their radar screen in any way yet.

All OTC (over the counter) products really should be viewed as a "medication," as each may help or harm, depending upon individual constitution, interactions with foods or other supplements, genetic predisposition, allergies, etc. For example, there are many who use and love Kava Kava, yet others express concerns about it. The same is true of St. John's Wort, Echinacea, etc.

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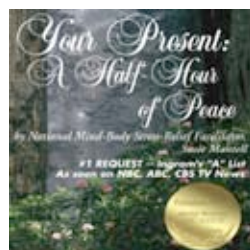
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There are serious pros and cons, depending upon who is taking a substance, what else they're taking or eating, why they are taking it, it's purity, dosage, etc. For example, people take Echinacea thinking it's great for the Immune System. However if someone has any form of autoimmune activity going on, by boosting immune activity, they can actually exacerbate their disease. Although some cancer survivors do well taking specific vitamins as directed by their physicians, in other cases, some supplements may actually be harmful.

Over-the-counter preparations, teas, amino acids, minerals, etc., can do great good in some cases, but exactly as with prescription medications, skilled, professional medical advice is essential. The final decision truly should be made by a health care professional who knows your history, what else you are taking, your personal allergies or sensitivities, the reason you desire medications for anxiety or depression, and is well-acquainted with all the biochemical effects the product might have, not just on "anyone," but on you. (S)he also needs to monitor you and make dosage adjustments as needed. Become an informed health care consumer, ask lots of questions, and take notes for future reference. You might also want to check out various websites created to help consumers like: <http://www.consumerlab.com/> In the meantime, for some possible relief of some stress symptoms associated with depression, take a look at tips on my site for some techniques that may also be helpful www.relaxintuit.com

Please note that I am not a medical professional. I am delighted that we have so many integrative and progressive alternatives to use in conjunction with traditional Western medicine, but I have great concerns about how quick people are to take botanical medical preparations or nutritional supplements without full information and follow-up monitoring. L-Theanine may or may not be for you. Keep reading and talking with professionals who can advise, and supervise whatever course you choose.

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