Can Kombucha Feed Candida and Cause Heartburn?
By Body Ecology – November 27, 2012

The tingle across your palate. The explosion of bubbles in your mouth. It’s no wonder that fizzy drinks are so wildly popular.

As it turns out, our attraction to sparkling beverages may have very old roots. According to the Weston A. Price Foundation, bubbly refreshments have been used as a digestive and restorative tonic for centuries. [1]

Even today, some mothers still believe carbonated drinks will help an upset tummy.

Of course, many of these carbonated drinks have no long-term benefits. And some carbonated drinks, like soda, are even destructive to our health. Over the last several years, healthier alternatives have been showing up on market shelves.

Kombucha is for many a healthy alternative to soda pop. It is available in health food stores, and some brands even make a variety of flavors.

But those with weak immune function, hormonal imbalances, or pre-existing gut disorders are often unable to tolerate kombucha.

The Difference Between Kombucha and Other Carbonated Beverages

Kombucha is one type of a lacto-fermented beverage. It is made by adding sugar to black, green, or yerba mate tea and then allowing a select community of microorganisms to feed on the sugars. During the fermentation process, bacteria multiply and produce lactic acid. Lactic acid is what gives kombucha its distinctly sour taste.

One difference between kefir, kvass, and kombucha is the culture that is used in the fermentation process.

For example:
- Kefir is traditionally made with kefir grains, which look like translucent, irregularly-shaped pearls.
- Kvass is made with fresh, unpasteurized whey.
- Kombucha tea is made with a symbiotic colony of bacteria and yeast, commonly called a SCOBY.

The Problem with Wild Ferments

Wild ferments are uncontrolled and unregulated. They rely on the microorganisms that are found in the starter or SCOBY. When it comes to wildly fermented drinks, environment also plays a role.

While some people can and do benefit from wildly fermented foods and drinks, others cannot tolerate some microorganisms that show up in a wild ferment. This is especially true if you are battling:

- Candida overgrowth
- Small intestinal bacterial overgrowth
- Irritable bowel syndrome

While kombucha may contain many beneficial strains of lactic acid bacteria (or probiotics), it can also contain several strains of yeast. Some of these yeasts are beneficial to the body; others are not. [2]

The problem with wildly fermented kombucha tea is that most of us have no way of knowing what strains of yeast the kombucha SCOBY contains. [3]
In fact, one study found that some kombucha samples harbored Candida albicans, the yeast that is responsible for Candida overgrowth. [4]

**If You Are Healing, Kombucha May Be a Roadblock**

The kombucha SCOBY is well-tolerated by many people. However, if you are struggling with any health disorder, you may want to think twice about drinking wildly fermented beverages like kombucha tea. This is especially true if you have a pre-existing Candida yeast infection.

If you would like more information on whether or not kombucha tea is right for you, you can speak with your primary care physician about:

- A stool sample, which can help to reveal how in or out of balance your inner ecology is.
- A urine organic acids test. This can help to detect small intestinal bacterial overgrowth or a Candida yeast infection.
- A blood analysis to check for intestinal permeability or “leaky gut.”

While lab tests are good for information, if you already have signs and symptoms of an imbalanced inner ecology, you may want to try removing kombucha tea first from your diet.

Other wildly fermented beverages, such as kefir and kvass, may contribute to the problem, rather than the solution. With a wild ferment, there is no way to tell.

**The Healthy Way to Ferment**

If you have been on the Body Ecology Diet, you probably already know about starter cultures used to regulate the type of bacteria that flourishes instead of risking a wild ferment.

Both coconut water kefir and even milk kefir can be made in a way that benefits the digestive tract and the immune system. The key: Inoculate your coconut water or dairy with specific strains of bacteria and yeast, not wild grains.

When you choose a starter with specific yeast and bacteria, you choose what grows and ultimately what ends up in your body.

For those of us who cannot chance [potentially] harmful strains of yeast in a wild ferment, cultured beverages like coconut water kefir are the perfect solution!

References:


