



DOSSIER · SUBSTANCE

L-Theanine

L-theanine is an amino acid from tea leaves; human studies show mainly a faster reaction time and evidence of benefits for stress, sleep and mood.

416

STUDIES IN
TOTAL

100

IN HUMANS

62

OF WHICH
CONTROLLED

23

IN ANIMALS

33

IN THE LAB

Figures from the IHR study database · Last updated 2026-10-16

How to Read This Dossier

ESTABLISHED

measured in humans, with a comparison group

PLAUSIBLE

supported by mechanism, animal studies or observation

HYPOTHESIS

a likely connection that still needs to be tested

L-Theanine at a Glance

In controlled studies, L-theanine as a pure substance shortened reaction time compared with placebo ⁵²⁵⁷; a meta-analysis confirms this for choice reaction tasks ¹.

Compared with placebo, L-theanine reduced anxiety as an add-on to antipsychotic therapy in schizophrenia ³¹ and before an archery competition ⁶⁴; in generalized anxiety disorder, no difference was found ³⁴.

With L-theanine, compared with placebo, sleep efficiency improved in boys with ADHD ²³, the reported sleep onset latency ⁴⁰ and sleep satisfaction in anxiety disorder ³⁴.

The combination of L-theanine and caffeine accelerated the response to target stimuli in two small crossover studies; L-theanine alone did so there as well ⁴⁶⁶³.

We evaluated 120 human studies on L-Theanine, including 60 randomised controlled trials and 16 meta-analyses or systematic reviews; the controlled studies include 3,180 participants in total. As of 11 October 2026.

1. What Is L-Theanine? Occurrence, Origin and Forms

L-theanine is an amino acid that occurs naturally in the leaves of the tea plant (Camellia sinensis) and has also been detected in some edible mushrooms. It is not one of the building blocks of proteins and is studied mainly as a pure substance. Traditionally it is associated with the calm, alert state that follows drinking tea.

In nature it occurs in the leaves and buds of the tea plant and in a few mushroom species. As a pure substance it appears in capsules, powders and beverages.

For research, L-theanine is extracted from tea leaves or produced microbially and used as a pure substance with a defined content. Studies examine capsules and powders, theanine-containing plant extracts, and combinations with caffeine.

Forms and Preparations Studied

- L-theanine as a pure substance (capsule or powder)
- D-theanine and racemic theanine
- Theanine-containing tea or plant extract
- Theanine combined with caffeine
- Theanine-containing beverages

Not covered on this page:

- Theophylline and theobromine — related purine alkaloids from tea and cocoa, but different substances
- Caffeine on its own
- Other amino acids described as calming, such as glycine, taurine or GABA
- Green tea extracts in which ingredients other than theanine form the difference between the groups

2. What Does L-Theanine Do? Results by Area

AREA	RESULT IN CONTROLLED STUDIES	STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE	STUDIES	PARTICIPANTS
Cognition and Attention	mixed	high	3 meta-analyses · 17 controlled · 9 other	594
Stress and Tension	mixed	high	2 meta-analyses · 12 controlled · 10 other	600
Sleep and Sleep Quality	mostly improved	high	3 meta-analyses · 6 controlled · 10 other	204
Mood and Relaxation	mixed	high	1 meta-analyses · 5 controlled · 6 other	180
Theanine Combined with Caffeine	mostly improved	moderate	0 meta-analyses · 10 controlled · 6 other	208
Blood Pressure and Cardiovascular Function	mostly no difference	low	0 meta-analyses · 2 controlled · 3 other	25
Other investigations	mostly improved	high	2 meta-analyses · 5 controlled · 15 other	220

How to read the table: counted are human studies whose results concern the area. “High” means at least one meta-analysis and two controlled studies showing improvement, or at least three controlled studies of which three quarters show improvement, with at least 300 participants in total. “Moderate” means at least two controlled studies showing improvement, as a majority, or one meta-analysis alongside controlled studies. “Low” means one controlled

study showing improvement. Where an area has no controlled study, the strength of evidence is at most “low” (result “reviews only” or “observational data only”). Everything else is “unclear”. A study counts as showing improvement when at least half of its outcomes in this area improved. Reviews of combination products do not count as meta-analyses; results that only describe side effects or shares of users do not count as an effect. The same study is counted only once.

3. What the Studies Show in Detail

L-Theanine, Cognition and Attention: Human Studies

L-theanine was studied predominantly as a pure substance in capsule or powder form, mostly as a single dose. A meta-analysis found a faster choice reaction time after a single dose than under placebo ¹. Individual studies showed faster reactions in the Stroop test ⁵² and with simple stimuli ⁵⁷, another meta-analysis found no difference there ⁴. In a crossover study in healthy adults, executive function and verbal fluency improved after L-theanine, not after placebo ⁴⁰⁵⁴. A randomized controlled trial with matcha, which contains caffeine and catechins in addition to L-theanine, found faster reactions in the Stroop test after mild stress than under placebo ³⁵. Reviews attribute the most pronounced attention effects to the combination with caffeine or green tea; they do not belong to L-theanine alone ¹⁰¹³¹⁴. A randomized controlled trial with a nutrient-enriched breakfast bar containing L-theanine, α-linolenic acid, L-tyrosine, vitamins, minerals and caffeine found better attention, working and episodic memory as well as executive function ²⁴. Many studies tested only single doses over short periods; the study on executive function was manufacturer-funded ⁵⁴.

STUDY	DESIGN · PARTICIPANTS	PREPARATION · DOSE · DURATION · COMPARISON
¹ Gerolymos et al. 2026	meta-analysis · 1,168 participants	Oral L-theanine; 200 mg single dose; 400 mg/day for 8 weeks; Single dose; 8 weeks with repeated dosing; vs. Placebo
⁴ Mátyus et al. 2025	meta-analysis · 148 participants	L-theanine (pure substance, heterogeneous preparations); dose-dependent effect, exact dose not reported; vs. placebo
⁵ Payne et al. 2025	meta-analysis	Tea, L-theanine alone, or L-theanine plus caffeine; Not reported; Not reported; vs. Placebo
¹² Cicero et al. 2018	systematic review	L-theanine, alone or in combination
¹⁹ Deshpande et al. 2025	randomised controlled · 168 participants	oral L-theanine; measured 60 minutes before and after administration; vs. oral GABA and oral alprazolam 0.25 mg
²⁶ McAllister et al. 2024	randomised controlled · 80 participants	L-theanine 200 mg vs. L-tyrosine 2000 mg vs. placebo; 200 mg L-theanine; vs. placebo (n = 27)
³¹ Ritsner et al. 2011	randomised controlled · 60 participants	L-theanine added to ongoing antipsychotic treatment; 400 mg/d; 8 weeks; vs. Placebo added to antipsychotic treatment
³⁴ Sarris et al. 2019	randomised controlled · 46 participants	L-theanine as pure substance (capsule) added to antidepressant; 450-900 mg; 8 weeks double-blind (10-week study)

Further studies in this area: [39](#) [40](#) [41](#) [46](#) [47](#) [52](#) [56](#) [57](#) [59](#) [61](#) [63](#) [69](#) [70](#) [75](#) [76](#) [84](#) [85](#) [86](#) [93](#) [94](#) [95](#)

L-Theanine, Stress and Tension: Human Studies

Compared with placebo, L-theanine as an add-on to antipsychotic therapy reduced anxiety in schizophrenia ³¹ and, in female archers, competition anxiety ⁶⁴. Before operations, in one study without a placebo group, it had an anxiety-relieving effect and was less sedating than alprazolam ¹⁹. In a crossover study in healthy individuals, anxiety and depression scores decreased only after L-theanine, but a confirmed group difference was not reported for this ⁴⁰⁵⁴. A systematic review on the pure substance considers a reduction in stress under load possible ¹¹. A meta-analysis found a small reduction in acute stress supported by error-prone studies and no consistent effect on anxiety ¹. A controlled study found no differences in salivary alpha-amylase, secretory IgA, heart rate and State-Trait Anxiety Inventory during a stress exercise ²⁶. In generalized anxiety disorder, L-theanine as an add-on therapy did not reduce anxiety more than placebo ³⁴. The form tested was predominantly L-theanine as a pure substance in capsule or powder form.

STUDY	DESIGN · PARTICIPANTS	PREPARATION · DOSE · DURATION · COMPARISON
¹ Gerolymos et al. 2026	meta-analysis · 1,168 participants	Oral L-theanine; 200 mg single dose; 400 mg/day for 8 weeks; Single dose; 8 weeks with repeated dosing; vs. Placebo
¹¹ Williams et al. 2020	systematic review	Pure L-theanine as oral nutritional supplement; 200-400 mg/day; vs. Control group
¹⁹ Deshpande et al. 2025	randomised controlled · 168 participants	oral L-theanine; measured 60 minutes before and after administration; vs. oral GABA and oral alprazolam 0.25 mg

STUDY	DESIGN · PARTICIPANTS	PREPARATION · DOSE · DURATION · COMPARISON
20 Furushima et al. 2022	randomised controlled · 120 participants	Beverage with L-theanine, L-theanine plus L-arginine, or placebo; 200 mg L-theanine; combination: 200 mg L-theani
26 McAllister et al. 2024	randomised controlled · 80 participants	L-theanine 200 mg vs. L-tyrosine 2000 mg vs. placebo; 200 mg L-theanine; vs. placebo (n = 27)
31 Ritsner et al. 2011	randomised controlled · 60 participants	L-theanine added to ongoing antipsychotic treatment; 400 mg/d; 8 weeks; vs. Placebo added to antipsychotic treatr
34 Sarris et al. 2019	randomised controlled · 46 participants	L-theanine as pure substance (capsule) added to antidepressant; 450-900 mg; 8 weeks double-blind (10-week stud;
39 Moulin et al. 2024	randomised controlled · 30 participants	AlphaWave® L-theanine (400 mg L-theanine/day) or placebo; 400 mg L-theanine/day; 28 days; vs. Placebo

Further studies in this area: [40](#) [44](#) [53](#) [64](#) [65](#) [67](#) [73](#) [74](#) [75](#) [76](#) [83](#) [84](#) [86](#) [90](#) [91](#) [92](#)

L-Theanine, Sleep and Sleep Quality: Human Studies

In boys with ADHD, L-theanine improved sleep efficiency compared with placebo, but not sleep onset latency ²³. In healthy adults, sleep onset latency and sleep disturbances improved more than under placebo in the sleep questionnaire ⁴⁰. In anxiety disorder, sleep satisfaction increased more than under placebo, the severity of insomnia did not differ ³⁴. Under an L-theanine preparation, light sleep decreased compared with placebo, but so did sleep duration ³⁹. A systematic review on the pure substance overall assesses the studies as an indication of better sleep ³. A mixed preparation of L-theanine, lemon balm, valerian and saffron did not differ from placebo in sleep efficiency, total sleep time, wake time after sleep onset and PSQI ²⁷²⁸. A mixture of L-theanine and casein hydrolysate prolonged sleep duration and sleep efficiency compared with placebo ³⁸. With Lactium and L-theanine, sleep quality and insomnia scores did not differ from placebo, only individual diary values ³⁶. Of two preparations with L-theanine, hemp-based cannabinoids, botanical oils and GABA, only the one containing THC improved sleep disorder compared with placebo ¹⁷. The form tested was mostly L-theanine as a capsule or tablet, alongside theanine-containing beverages and extracts.

STUDY	DESIGN · PARTICIPANTS	PREPARATION · DOSE · DURATION · COMPARISON
2 Bulman et al. 2025	meta-analysis · 897 participants	L-theanine supplementation; vs. randomised controlled trials
3 Cotter et al. 2026	systematic review · 550 participants	L-theanine as standalone supplement; 50-900 mg/day; vs. Placebo or control in 11 RCTs
7 Al et al. 2025	systematic review	L-theanine, partly combined with caffeine; vs. other supplements, stimulants, controls
16 Barrett et al. 2013	systematic review	L-theanine (pure substance); vs. Zolpidem, clonidine, melatonin
23 Lyon et al. 2011	randomised controlled · 98 participants	Suntheanine L-theanine chewable tablets (Taiyo Kagaku); two 100 mg tablets twice daily, total 400 mg/day; 6 weeks; vs. l
34 Sarris et al. 2019	randomised controlled · 46 participants	L-theanine as pure substance (capsule) added to antidepressant; 450-900 mg; 8 weeks double-blind (10-week study); vs
39 Moulin et al. 2024	randomised controlled · 30 participants	AlphaWave® L-theanine (400 mg L-theanine/day) or placebo; 400 mg L-theanine/day; 28 days; vs. Placebo
40 Hidese et al. 2019	randomised controlled · 30 participants	L-theanine tablets or placebo; 200 mg/day; 4 weeks; vs. Placebo (crossover, double-blind)

Further studies in this area: [50](#) [68](#) [75](#) [76](#) [77](#) [78](#) [79](#) [84](#) [87](#) [88](#) [92](#)

L-Theanine, Mood and Relaxation: Human Studies

As an add-on to sertraline, L-theanine in depression improved symptoms as well as response and remission more than placebo ²⁹. A meta-analysis found after a single dose in healthy individuals fewer depressive symptoms than under placebo, after excluding a divergent study ¹. At rest, a controlled study showed indications of a relaxing effect, under artificially induced anxiety neither L-theanine nor alprazolam had an anxiolytic effect ⁶⁵. Another found after a cognitive task less tension than under placebo ⁶⁶. Mixtures with L-theanine improved mood scores only compared with baseline or as an uncertain trend: a chamomile beverage ⁴⁸, matcha with catechins and caffeine ⁴⁹ and a fat spread with 5-hydroxytryptophan and GABA ⁵¹. There was no difference from placebo in mood under matcha as a beverage or bar ⁴² and in depression scores under L-theanine in addition to risperidone ³⁰. The findings come predominantly from small, short studies, partly in patient groups. Further investigations tested mixtures with caffeine ⁵, green tea constituents ⁶, cannabinoids and GABA ¹⁷ as well as vitamins, L-tyrosine and caffeine ²⁴; their findings do not belong to L-theanine alone.

STUDY	DESIGN · PARTICIPANTS	PREPARATION · DOSE · DURATION · COMPARISON
¹ Gerolymos et al. 2026	meta-analysis · 1,168 participants	Oral L-theanine; 200 mg single dose; 400 mg/day for 8 weeks; Single dose; 8 weeks with repeated dosing; vs. Placebo
¹⁴ Dietz et al. 2017	systematic review	L-theanine (pure) and L-theanine with caffeine; L-theanine from 200 mg; vs. caffeine alone, EGCG, placebo
²⁹ Shamabadi et al. 2023	randomised controlled · 60 participants	L-theanine 200 mg/d plus sertraline 100 mg/d; 200 mg/d L-theanine, 100 mg/d sertraline; 6 weeks; vs. placebo plus se
³⁰ Shamabadi et al. 2023	randomised controlled · 60 participants	L-theanine 400 mg/day adjunct to risperidone 6 mg/day; 400 mg/day L-theanine plus 6 mg/day risperidone; 8 weeks;
⁴⁰ Hidese et al. 2019	randomised controlled · 30 participants	L-theanine tablets or placebo; 200 mg/day; 4 weeks; vs. Placebo (crossover, double-blind)
⁶⁵ Lu et al. 2004	controlled · 16 participants	L-theanine 200 mg vs. alprazolam 1 mg vs. placebo; 200 mg L-theanine; acute single dose; vs. placebo and alprazolam
⁶⁶ Yoto et al. 2012	controlled · 14 participants	L-theanine + placebo, caffeine + placebo, placebo only; vs. placebo
⁷⁴ Sarris et al. 2022	study · 28 participants	Nutraceutical combination: N-acetyl cysteine, L-theanine, zinc, magnesium, pyridoxal-5' phosphate, selenium; 20 we

Further studies in this area: ⁷⁵ ⁷⁶ ⁸⁴ ⁸⁶

L-Theanine and Theanine Combined with Caffeine: Human Studies

In two small crossover studies, the combination of L-theanine and caffeine accelerated the reaction to target stimuli, but L-theanine alone did as well ⁴⁶⁶³. A randomized controlled study also found lower tension in a social stress situation when L-theanine was given together with caffeine instead of caffeine alone ³³. In contrast, a controlled study found no difference of the combination compared with placebo in global visual attention and in conflict processing, because the opposing effects of both substances canceled each other out ⁵⁶. A meta-analysis saw advantages of the combination especially in alertness and attention switching; the caffeine dose seemed to matter more than the theanine dose ¹⁵.

STUDY	DESIGN · PARTICIPANTS	PREPARATION · DOSE · DURATION · COMPARISON
⁵ Payne et al. 2025	meta-analysis	Tea, L-theanine alone, or L-theanine plus caffeine; Not reported; Not reported; vs. Placebo
⁷ Al et al. 2025	systematic review	L-theanine, partly combined with caffeine; vs. other supplements, stimulants, controls
¹⁰ Anas et al. 2021	systematic review	L-theanine, partly with caffeine
¹⁴ Dietz et al. 2017	systematic review	L-theanine (pure) and L-theanine with caffeine; L-theanine from 200 mg; vs. caffeine alone, EGCG, placebo
¹⁵ Camfield et al. 2014	meta-analysis	L-theanine and epigallocatechin gallate, alone or with caffeine; acute, up to 2 hours postdose; vs. placebo
³³ Krutzek et al. 2025	randomised controlled · 46 participants	L-theanine plus caffeine vs. caffeine alone; single dose (dose not reported); acute (single dose); vs. caffeine alone
⁴⁶ Kahathuduwa et al. 2018	randomised controlled · 9 participants	L-theanine 200 mg, caffeine 160 mg, their combination, placebo (distilled water); 200 mg L-theanine; 160 mg caffeine

STUDY	DESIGN · PARTICIPANTS	PREPARATION · DOSE · DURATION · COMPARISON
⁴⁷ Kahathuduwa et al. 2020	randomised controlled · 5 participants	L-theanine, caffeine, combination, placebo; L-theanine 2.5 mg/kg; caffeine 2.0 mg/kg; Acute (single dose); vs. Plac

Further studies in this area: [55](#) [56](#) [60](#) [62](#) [63](#) [68](#) [69](#) [95](#)

L-Theanine, Blood Pressure and Cardiovascular Function: Human Studies

For blood pressure and cardiovascular health, the evidence is limited: a controlled study (not randomized) with L-theanine as the pure substance found after a mental task a lower blood pressure increase, but only in strongly reacting individuals ⁶⁶. A randomized controlled study with L-theanine as the pure substance in a food matrix (mango sorbet), by contrast, found no difference in systolic and diastolic blood pressure, heart rate and heart rate variability ⁴⁵. Both studies were very small and short; the form tested was in each case L-theanine as the pure substance, once in a food matrix. It remains open whether the findings can be confirmed in larger groups, longer administration and other preparations.

STUDY	DESIGN · PARTICIPANTS	PREPARATION · DOSE · DURATION · COMPARISON
⁴⁵ Williams et al. 2020	randomised controlled · 11 participants	Mango sorbet containing L-theanine (200 mg w/w); 200 mg w/w L-theanine; Single intake, 90-minute observation; vs. Pl
⁶⁶ Yoto et al. 2012	controlled · 14 participants	L-theanine + placebo, caffeine + placebo, placebo only; vs. placebo
⁷⁷ Konno et al. 2026	case series · 19 participants	GABA plus L-theanine; GABA 700 mg/day, L-theanine 200 mg/day; 4 weeks; vs. no control arm (single-arm)
⁷⁸ Konno et al. 2023	study · 19 participants	GABA 700 mg/day plus L-theanine 200 mg/day; L-theanine 200 mg/day, GABA 700 mg/day; four weeks; vs. before vs. aft
⁸⁵ Yilmaz et al. 2025	review	Black tea (theanine-containing beverage); vs. no uniform comparator

L-Theanine: Further Outcomes in Studies

As an add-on to antipsychotic therapy, L-theanine in two placebo studies in schizophrenia improved individual PANSS scores ³⁰³¹; a secondary analysis linked the improvement to BDNF and the cortisol-DHEAS ratio ³⁷. The findings come from small, short add-on studies; since both groups received the antipsychotics, the difference is attributable to L-theanine.

STUDY	DESIGN · PARTICIPANTS	PREPARATION · DOSE · DURATION · COMPARISON
¹ Gerolymos et al. 2026	meta-analysis · 1,168 participants	Oral L-theanine; 200 mg single dose; 400 mg/day for 8 weeks; Single dose; 8 weeks with repeated dosing; vs. Plac
⁸ Moshfeghinia et al. 2024	systematic review	L-theanine supplementation, partly adjunct to psychopharmacological drugs; vs. Control conditions
¹⁹ Deshpande et al. 2025	randomised controlled · 168 participants	oral L-theanine; measured 60 minutes before and after administration; vs. oral GABA and oral alprazolam 0.25 mg
²⁹ Shamabadi et al. 2023	randomised controlled · 60 participants	I-theanine 200 mg/d plus sertraline 100 mg/d; 200 mg/d I-theanine, 100 mg/d sertraline; 6 weeks; vs. placebo plus
³⁰ Shamabadi et al. 2023	randomised controlled · 60 participants	L-theanine 400 mg/day adjunct to risperidone 6 mg/day; 400 mg/day L-theanine plus 6 mg/day risperidone; 8 we
³¹ Ritsner et al. 2011	randomised controlled · 60 participants	L-theanine added to ongoing antipsychotic treatment; 400 mg/d; 8 weeks; vs. Placebo added to antipsychotic trea

STUDY	DESIGN · PARTICIPANTS	PREPARATION · DOSE · DURATION · COMPARISON
32 Nematizadeh et al. 2023	randomised controlled · 50 participants	L-theanine plus fluvoxamine vs. placebo plus fluvoxamine; L-theanine 100 mg twice daily; fluvoxamine 100 mg dail
43 Juszkiewicz et al. 2019	randomised controlled · 20 participants	150 mg L-theanine extract vs. placebo; 150 mg L-theanine; 6 weeks; vs. placebo, double-blind, randomized

Further studies in this area: [58](#) [71](#) [72](#) [73](#) [74](#) [79](#) [80](#) [81](#) [82](#) [84](#) [85](#) [89](#) [92](#) [93](#)

4. How Is L-Theanine Dosed? Preparation, Dose and Duration in Studies

The studies tested predominantly L-theanine as a pure substance in capsule, powder or chewable tablet form, sometimes in a food matrix such as sorbet. In addition, theanine-containing beverages such as matcha, theanine-containing extracts and fixed combinations with caffeine were used. Individual investigations gave L-theanine in addition to an ongoing drug treatment.

PREPARATION OR FORM	DOSE	DURATION	STUDY
Sleep A or Sleep B (multi-ingredient supplements with L-theanine)	—	4 weeks	17
capsules with green tea catechins and theanine	theanine 210 mg/day plus catechins 378 mg/day	5 months (November 2009 to April 2010)	18
oral L-theanine	—	measured 60 minutes before and after administration	19
Beverage with L-theanine, L-theanine plus L-arginine, or placebo	200 mg L-theanine; combination: 200 mg L-theanine + 50 mg L-arginine	Measurements at 0, 5, and 15 min after stress test	20
Matcha green tea powder (contains theanine, EGCG, caffeine)	2 g daily	12 months	22
Suntheanine L-theanine chewable tablets (Taiyo Kagaku)	two 100 mg tablets twice daily, total 400 mg/day	6 weeks	23
nutrient enriched breakfast bar containing L-theanine	21.5 mg caffeine (theanine dose not reported)	56 days	24
LGNC-07 (green tea extract plus L-theanine)	1,680 mg LGNC-07 daily	16 weeks	25
L-theanine 200 mg vs. L-tyrosine 2000 mg vs. placebo	200 mg L-theanine	—	26
L-theanine plus lemon balm, valerian, and saffron extracts	—	6 weeks	27

PREPARATION OR FORM	DOSE	DURATION	STUDY
Nutraceutical combination with L-theanine from green tea extract, lemon balm, valerian, and saffron extracts	—	six weeks	28
L-theanine 200 mg/d plus sertraline 100 mg/d	200 mg/d L-theanine, 100 mg/d sertraline	6 weeks	29
L-theanine 400 mg/day adjunct to risperidone 6 mg/day	400 mg/day L-theanine plus 6 mg/day risperidone	8 weeks	30
L-theanine added to ongoing antipsychotic treatment	400 mg/d	8 weeks	31
L-theanine plus fluvoxamine vs. placebo plus fluvoxamine	L-theanine 100 mg twice daily; fluvoxamine 100 mg daily, 200 mg daily after week 5	10 weeks	32

5. Is L-Theanine Safe? Side Effects in Studies

In the studies, L-theanine was predominantly well tolerated; serious adverse events were not reported ^{[131](#)}. As an add-on to antipsychotics or sertraline, side effects in controlled studies did not differ from placebo ^{[293031](#)}.

STUDY	REPORTED SIDE EFFECTS
^{1} Gerolymos et al. 2026	No serious adverse events reported
^{3} Cotter et al. 2026	safe
^{5} Payne et al. 2025	Not reported
^{7} Al et al. 2025	Safety as adjunct therapy not conclusively established
^{9} Rocha et al. 2023	Impaired sleep quality (reduced REM, non-REM, slow-wave sleep, longer sleep-onset latency) for all except atomoxetine
^{12} Cicero et al. 2018	good tolerability and safety profile reported
^{17} Kolobaric et al. 2023	mild or moderate, no group differences
^{19} Deshpande et al. 2025	secondary objective: adverse reactions; not reported in abstract
^{21} Hamaguchi et al. 2020	No significant differences in capecitabine-induced adverse events; treatment safe
^{23} Lyon et al. 2011	well tolerated, no significant adverse events
^{27} Gutiérrez-Romero et al. 2024	No serious adverse events reported
^{28} Gutiérrez-Romero et al. 2023	No serious adverse events reported

6. What Remains Open: Limits of the Evidence

- Many studies tested only single doses over short periods and in small groups.
- The effect with longer use and in larger groups is open.
- Individual studies with positive results were manufacturer-funded.
- For mixed preparations with caffeine or other substances, the contribution of L-theanine alone cannot be distinguished.
- For blood pressure and heart rate, the evidence is limited and rests on very small, short studies.

7. Bottom Line: What Is Established About L-Theanine

L-theanine is an amino acid that occurs naturally in tea leaves and has been tested in studies predominantly as a pure substance.

A faster reaction time after L-theanine as a pure substance is best supported ¹⁵²⁵⁷. Compared with placebo, individual sleep measures also improved ²³⁴⁰ and, as an add-on to medications, anxiety in schizophrenia ³¹ as well as depression ²⁹. In two small studies, L-theanine accelerated reaction alone as well as combined with caffeine ⁴⁶⁶³. For blood pressure and heart rate, the evidence is limited: one controlled study found a smaller rise in blood pressure after a mental task only in highly reactive individuals ⁶⁶, a randomized controlled study found no difference ⁴⁵. Next, it would need to be clarified whether the findings on sleep and anxiety can be confirmed in larger and longer placebo studies.

Frequently Asked Questions

How well has L-Theanine been studied in humans?

We evaluated 120 human studies on L-Theanine, including 60 randomised controlled trials and 16 meta-analyses or systematic reviews; the controlled studies include 3,180 participants in total. As of 11 October 2026.

Does L-Theanine help with cognition and Attention? What the studies show

We evaluated 3 meta-analyses or systematic reviews, 17 controlled studies and 9 further studies; the controlled studies include 594 participants in total. Result of the controlled studies: mixed. Strength of evidence under our published rules: high. Sources: ¹⁴⁵¹²

Does L-Theanine help with stress and Tension? What the studies show

We evaluated 2 meta-analyses or systematic reviews, 12 controlled studies and 10 further studies; the controlled studies include 600 participants in total. Result of the controlled studies: mixed. Strength of evidence under our published rules: high. Sources: ¹¹¹¹⁹²⁰

Does L-Theanine help with sleep and Sleep Quality? What the studies show

We evaluated 3 meta-analyses or systematic reviews, 6 controlled studies and 10 further studies; the controlled studies include 204 participants in total. Result of the controlled studies: mostly improved. Strength of evidence under our published rules: high. Sources: ²³⁷¹⁶

Does L-Theanine help with mood and Relaxation? What the studies show

We evaluated one meta-analysis or systematic review, 5 controlled studies and 6 further studies; the controlled studies include 180 participants in total. Result of the controlled studies: mixed. Strength of evidence under our published rules: high. Sources: ¹¹⁴²⁹³⁰

Does L-Theanine help with theanine Combined with Caffeine? What the studies show

We evaluated 10 controlled studies and 6 further studies; the controlled studies include 208 participants in total. Result of the controlled studies: mostly improved. Strength of evidence under our published rules: moderate. Sources: ⁵⁷¹⁰¹⁴

Does L-Theanine help with blood Pressure and Cardiovascular Function? What the studies show

We evaluated 2 controlled studies and 3 further studies; the controlled studies include 25 participants in total. Result of the controlled studies: mostly no difference. Strength of evidence under our published rules: low. Sources: ⁴⁵⁶⁶⁷⁷⁷⁸

What is L-theanine and where does it occur?

L-theanine is an amino acid that occurs naturally in the leaves of the tea plant (*Camellia sinensis*) and has also been detected in some edible mushrooms. It is not one of the building blocks of proteins. In studies, it is tested predominantly as a pure substance.

What effects do human studies show?

Most clearly, L-theanine shortened reaction time ¹⁵²⁵⁷. Compared with placebo, it also reduced competition anxiety in female athletes ⁶⁴ and, as an add-on therapy, anxiety in schizophrenia ³¹ as well as depression scores in depression ²⁹. For sleep, compared with placebo, sleep efficiency improved in boys with ADHD ²³, the reported sleep onset latency in healthy individuals ⁴⁰ and sleep satisfaction ³⁴.

Are there also studies without effect?

Yes. In generalized anxiety disorder, L-theanine did not reduce anxiety more than placebo ³⁴, stress markers during a stress exercise remained unchanged ²⁶, and under artificially induced anxiety it did not have an anxiolytic effect ⁶⁵.

What should be considered with combinations with caffeine?

Combinations with caffeine are mixtures; their findings do not belong to theanine alone. The combination accelerated the reaction in two small studies, but L-theanine alone did so as well ⁴⁶⁶³; compared with caffeine alone, it lowered tension in a social stress situation ³³.

How well tolerated is L-theanine?

In the studies, L-theanine was predominantly well tolerated; serious adverse events were not reported ¹³¹. As an add-on to antipsychotics or sertraline, side effects in controlled studies did not differ from placebo ²⁹³⁰³¹.

Sources

- 1 Cognitive and affective effects of L-Theanine: a systematic review and meta-analysis of 31 randomized trials
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