

Is Coffee Good for You?

Many of us wouldn't think of starting our day without a steaming cup of our favorite blend. In terms of our health, though, is this a good thing? Let's take a look at the science.

As one of the world's most popular drinks, coffee has been studied a LOT and with varying conclusions. In fact, it's gone from being on the World Health Organization's list of possible carcinogens in 1991, to being removed and subsequently hailed as a "healthy beverage."

Overflowing with Antioxidants

We know that coffee is rich in caffeine, Vitamin B₂ (riboflavin) magnesium and plant chemicals, such as polyphenols. An eight-ounce cup of coffee has approximately 95 mg of caffeine, and according to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, a moderate amount of coffee is defined as three to five cups per day, or about 400 mg of caffeine.

Health Benefits

While more than six cups a day could lead to anxiety, heart palpitations or stomach problems, moderate coffee consumption can actually be part of a healthy lifestyle. Here are just a few findings:

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1. **Research has shown that coffee may be related to lower incidence of certain types of cancer**, including colon cancer, based on its ability to stimulate bile acid production and speed digestion through the colon, which can lower the amount of carcinogens that colon tissue is exposed to. Polyphenols found in coffee have also been shown to prevent cancer cell growth in animal studies.

2. **Cognitive benefits** of moderate amounts of caffeine and coffee: increased alertness, energy and improved mental focus.
3. **Antioxidants in coffee have shown to reduce inflammation**, and the American Institute for Cancer Research concluded that coffee may reduce risk for endometrial and liver cancer.
4. A 20-year study of more than 45,000 people showed that habitual coffee drinkers had between an 8-33% **lower risk of developing type 2 diabetes**, compared to non-coffee drinkers.
5. In a study of 83,000 women in the well known Nurses' Health Study, drinking four or more cups of coffee was associated with a **20% lower risk of stroke**, compared with non-coffee drinkers. No other caffeinated drinks, such as tea or soda, showed this correlation.
6. The same Nurses Study also found a **21% reduced risk of heart disease** in those who drank 2-3 cups of coffee per day.
7. Two other analyses of 57 studies of men and women found a 15-21% **lower risk of cardiovascular disease** in those who drank 3 cups per day.
8. Studies of more than 300,000 participants have also linked coffee consumption with decreased depression; the findings showed a 24% reduced risk among those who drank 4.5 cups compared to those who had less than one cup.

So if you enjoy coffee, drink up if your doctor says, "Okay." Just go easy on the sugar, whipped cream and added flavors so you don't undo the benefits from this warm boost of goodness.

SOURCES:

World Health Organization

Harvard University- T.H. Chan School of Public Health National Institute of Health