

# Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

By Randolph M. Howes, M.D., Ph.D.

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## “Coffee: Can It Cure Cancer ?”

At times, it seems that science is getting a little wacko and this is especially true for discussions on the potential benefits or harm of coffee. A new study (EPIC) has found that drinking three to four cups of coffee a day could reduce the risk of endometrial cancer by almost a fifth. Endometrial cancer is a cancer that begins in the lining of the uterus, called the endometrium. According to the American Cancer Society (ACS), around 54,870 women will be diagnosed with endometrial cancer or uterine sarcomas this year, and 10,170 will die from the conditions. Coffee consumption may not only be beneficial for endometrial cancer. Last month, Medical News Today reported on a study published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, in which researchers suggested drinking four cups of coffee a day could reduce the risk of melanoma skin cancer. And in April 2014, investigators reported on a study by researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston, MA, who claimed increased coffee consumption could lower the risk of type 2 diabetes. Also, according to the Washington Post, a new report just released by the federal government's Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee says consumption of between three and five cups of coffee per day "is tied to several health benefits, including a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes." However, a USDA statistic which says that "Americans only drink about one cup of coffee per day." No country in the world downs more than 3 cups each day per capita, according to market research firm, Euromonitor. The country that drinks the most—Netherlands—still falls more than half a cup short of the three cup threshold each day. Studies showing positive results have found that coffee "may" boost athletic speed, increase endurance and prevent muscle fatigue. It "may" lower the risk of colon cancer, gallstones and Parkinson's disease. But pregnant women "may" increase the risk of miscarriage with coffee ingestion; whereas, non-pregnant women "may" reduce the risk of endometrial cancer. For most people the benefits seem to outweigh the risks. Some studies show that two cups of daily coffee lower the risk of developing heart failure; whereas, excessive amounts "may" increase the risk of heart attacks and strokes. Other studies show coffee "may" reduce the risk of basal cell skin cancer, type II diabetes and liver cancer. Others show that coffee "may" cause heartburn, nervousness, palpitations, irregular heartbeats, urinary urgency and insomnia. Yet, a May 2011 study found that men who drink six or more cups a day had a decreased risk of fatal prostate cancer.

In the America that I love, enjoy your coffee but don't expect it to cure cancer.

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