

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

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"Coffee May Help Prolong Life"

According to some studies, coffee is in the “almost too good to be true” category, as reliable evidence is becoming available supporting its health promoting potential. Coffee is the leading worldwide beverage and its trade exceeds US \$10 billion. Currently, 54% of Americans over the age of 18 drink coffee every day. Americans average 3.1 cups a day and the average size of a cup is 9 oz. One recent study found that regularly drinking coffee was linked with a decreased risk of developing heart failure and strokes and it may help regulate blood sugar levels. However, this data cannot conclusively identify cause and effect. Recently, Prof. Miguel Martínez-González — from the University of Navarra in Spain — presented unpublished research suggesting that drinking coffee is associated with a reduced risk of death. Prof. Martínez-González has found that drinking between three and six cups of coffee per day can reduce all-cause mortality. For each two additional cups of coffee per day, the risk of death is reduced by as much as 22%. More than one study found that drinking coffee was tied to a lower death risk. Various meta-analyses found that coffee drinkers had up to a 17% lower risk of death from all causes, compared with people who did not drink coffee. Moreover, a study conducted by researchers from the Imperial College London, concluded that, among the cohort of participants they worked with, those with the highest consumption of coffee had the lowest risk of all-cause mortality. Additionally, research looking at the association between coffee consumption and the risk of death among non-white populations in the United States found that participants who drank one cup of coffee each day had a 12% lower death risk compared with non-drinkers. Many, but not all, research investigations have revealed coffee may reduce the risk of diabetes mellitus, liver cancer, melanoma skin cancer, endometrial cancer, erectile dysfunction, various other cancer lines, mild cognitive impairment, Parkinsonism, and Alzheimer's disease. On the other hand, higher levels of some of these compounds found in coffee raise serum cholesterol, posing a possible threat to coronary health, for example, myocardial and cerebral infarction (heart attacks and strokes), insomnia, and cardiovascular complications. The caffeine in coffee, tea, cola, and energy drinks can cause short-term spikes in blood pressure. A review of five trials found that drinking up to 2 cups of strong coffee can increase both systolic and diastolic blood pressure for 3 hours after consumption.

In the America that I love we must remember that caffeine is a drug, and as with any drug, there are right ways and wrong ways to use it. Caffeine is addictive and users can become dependent on it. So, enjoy your coffee in moderation.

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