

The Wellness Express



Jump on the train to good health

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The Health Pros and Cons of Coffee

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History reveals that coffee beans were first cultivated, distributed and brewed in the Middle East, probably in the 15th century. It is unlikely the first coffee drinkers were aware of any health benefits this new beverage provided. In fact, it is only recently that science has revealed some of the healthy benefits coffee might deliver. Most research points to coffee as being generally good for your health. However, coffee does have its drawbacks. In this issue of Wellness Express, we look at the health pros and cons of coffee.

The Pros of Coffee

Coffee contains a number of different nutrients including amino acids, vitamins and minerals. It is also rich in antioxidants. The impact of caffeine on delivering therapeutic benefits on diseases remains unsettled. It seems to play a bigger role in Parkinson's disease and cancer than other health conditions.



Alzheimer's Disease:

According to a 2008 study published in the journal *Alzheimer's & Dementia*, researchers followed 1,400 people in Sweden and Finland for 20 years and discovered those reporting coffee consumption of 3 to 5 cups daily were 65% less likely to develop Alzheimer's or dementia in mid-life compared to occasional or non-coffee drinkers.¹

Cancer:

As there are so many types of cancer, there is still more research needed in this area. But studies on liver cancer are encouraging. Individuals who have a history of liver disorders and other risk factors, such as obesity or diabetes, cut the risk of liver cancer by 50% when they consumed at least 1 cup of coffee daily.²

Although still early in their research, scientists announced at the AACR Frontiers in Cancer Prevention Research Conference in 2009 that men who drink moderately high levels of coffee may slash their risk of aggressive prostate cancers by 60%.



Exercise of the Week

Plank Position

- One Foot on Exercise Ball

Difficulty: Moderate

(Consult your chiropractor before doing this or any other exercise.)

Start: Lie on ball, face down. Walk hands out to assume plank position with lower legs (shins) or feet on ball. The closer the ball is to feet, the more difficult the exercise. Keep stomach tucked in and spine straight.

Exercise: Keeping abdominals contracted and upper body still, lift one foot/leg straight up. Hold this finish position for 10-15 seconds. Switch legs. Hold for another 10-15 seconds. Place foot back on ball and walk hands back to rest position. Repeat 2-3 times.



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Diabetes:

Its impact on diabetes is one of the most investigated areas in coffee health research. In animal studies, coffee helped prevent high blood sugar levels from developing. Scientists believe caffeine may be the main mechanism involved in this result, although in other diabetic studies this theory is still not entirely supported. In a research review of nine cohort studies involving 193,000 men and women, coffee drinking reduced the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. People who consumed a minimum of 4 to 6 cups daily were at 28 % lower risk of developing this kind of diabetes compared to those who drank less than 2 cups daily.³

Parkinson's disease:

Caffeine is believed to play a large role in this degenerative neurological illness. In a Finnish study, men and women who drank one or more cups of regular coffee slashed their risk of Parkinson's disease by 60%.⁴

The Cons of Coffee

Unfortunately, the news is not all good on coffee. You can become addicted caffeine, and the unpleasant side effects include irritability, nervousness, tremors, heartburn and insomnia. Here are a few other areas of concern:

Blood pressure:

Caffeine causes your blood pressure to rise, even with moderate amounts. A review of 18 randomized control studies showed that 3 cups of coffee daily boosted systolic blood pressure by 1.2 mm Hg.⁵ If your blood pressure is already medium to high, you may want to consider switching to decaffeinated coffee.

Bone Health:

Calcium is extremely important for the health of your bones. But research indicates that caffeine can hamper calcium absorption in your body and increase the risk of osteoporosis. Talk to your chiropractor about the right amounts of calcium and vitamin D for you. In related research, women who drank more than 2 cups of caffeinated beverages a day were 69% more likely to have a hip fracture over the next decade compared to women who did not drink these products.⁶

Stress Hormones:

Caffeine causes the adrenal glands to release the hormone cortisol, which suppresses your immune system and reduces bone formation.

While many studies show positive health advantages associated with coffee, you should note that some of the studies were conducted on animals and not on humans. As well, the daily amount of coffee consumed in the research studies often varied considerably. More clinical trials on coffee need to be conducted, especially on how health benefits may differ between caffeinated and decaffeinated coffee. At this point, a majority of health experts believe it is premature to recommend coffee specifically for disease prevention.



Quote to Inspire

"Be a 'How' thinker, not an 'if' thinker."

- Anonymous

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