

Nutrition News

Department of Human Nutrition



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Another Cup of Coffee for the Road...to Good Health?

Coffee drinkers have weathered the ups and downs of health-related warnings through the years. Is coffee harmful, or does it boost our well-being? Numerous recent studies tout coffee's apparent health benefits.

The anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties of coffee are possible reasons behind the benefits, according to separate studies. Coffee contains four times more antioxidants than green tea – and brewing adds 300 more antioxidants to the 1000+ found in green coffee beans. Roasting those green coffee beans adds even more healthful benefits.

A Finnish study reported in the January 2009 issue of *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* found that those who drank three to five cups of coffee per day in middle-age were two-thirds less likely than non-drinkers to develop dementia, including Alzheimer's disease. The researchers note that more study is needed, because it isn't clear whether it is something about the coffee itself, or perhaps the coffee

drinkers, that explains the results of the study. One possible reason noted was that coffee drinkers may have a lower risk of type 2 diabetes – a condition linked to a higher risk of dementia. In a 2005 meta-analysis, van Dam and Hu identified eight cohort studies conducted between 2002 and 2004 inversely associating higher coffee consumption with type 2 diabetes incidence.

In a separate study, a research team at UCLA reported in February 2009 that as coffee drinking increases, the prevalence of stroke decreases. The authors found that those who drank six or more cups a day had a stroke prevalence of 2.9 percent. Those who drank just one or two cups daily had a stroke prevalence of 5 percent.

Over 19,000 studies have been conducted in recent decades examining coffee's impact on health. Most have been positive for coffee drinkers. Tomas DePaulis, PhD, research scientist at Vanderbilt University's Institute for Coffee Studies, summarizes the institute's

findings as good news for coffee drinkers. For most people, DePaulis notes, "very little bad comes from drinking it, but a lot of good." That "good" would include results from a half dozen studies showing those who drink coffee on a regular basis are up to 80% less likely to develop Parkinson's disease. Additional studies show that compared to not drinking coffee, at least two cups per day can mean a 25% reduced risk of colon cancer, an 80% decrease in liver cirrhosis risk, and nearly a 50% risk of gallstones.

This doesn't mean non-coffee drinkers should start working to develop a coffee habit. But for those who enjoy a cup or two, or more, well... here's a mug to good health!

Sources: Kirchheimer, Sid. Coffee: The New Health Food? WebMD Feature archive accessed at <http://men.webmd.com/features/coffee-new-health-food> on April 16, 2009.

Disease Fighting at <http://coffeescience.org/fitness/diseasefight> on April 16, 2009.

Eskelinen, M.H. Midlife coffee and tea drinking and the risk of late-life dementia: A population-based CAIDE study. *J of Alzheimer's Disease*, vol. 16, no.1, pp 85-91.

For more information about healthy eating, contact your local extension office. The Food Assistance Program can help people of all ages with low income buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, call toll-free 1-888-369-4777.

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