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Many of us rely on coffee to get us going in the mornings, wake us up in the afternoons, and prepare us for that special business meeting. Go ahead, have a cup of coffee. It's much healthier than you may be thinking right now.

Coffee is the most consumed beverage in the world. No matter where you go, coffee is usually available. Yet, until recently there's been very little research on the effects of coffee on our health. The researcher's are waking up however. There have recently been studies completed on a variety of health benefits to drinking that simply delicious cup of coffee.

In a study in Italy, it was proven that that brewed coffee contains many antioxidants and consumption of antioxidant-rich brewed coffee may inhibit diseases caused by oxidative damages. When compared to other caffeine containing beverages like tea and cocoa, coffee proved to be the best in helping to prevent disease.

Caffeine in Coffee - Good or Bad?

The caffeine in coffee has often been a source of concern for many. Most people have problems sleeping when they drink coffee right before bedtime. Others will drink coffee to give them that boost of energy caffeine provides. Some even feel their heart rate increase if they drink too much coffee.

Did you know there are also benefits to the caffeine found in coffee? Coffee intake (due to the caffeine) was associated with a significantly lower risk for Alzheimer's Disease, independently of other possible confounding variables. These results, with future prospective studies, may have a major impact on the prevention of Alzheimer's disease.

Another benefit of drinking coffee has been studied in China. Their research clinically proved the caffeine in coffee helps to prevent Parkinson's disease. Many of us have been led to believe that

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caffeine is bad for us. True enough, large quantities may hurt us, but the evidence is strong for the benefits it provides.

Coffee - Healthy Tonic for the Liver?

Studies completed in Japan indicated that people who drink more than a cup of coffee a day are less likely to develop liver cancer than those who do not, Japanese researchers say. Coffee also helped lower the risk of cirrhosis of the liver. Chlorogenic acid present in coffee beans has been proven in studies to also reduce the risk of liver cancer.

Harvard Medical School completed a study in 2004 that strongly suggest coffee has preventative qualities for Type 2 diabetes and insulin resistance. The authors found an inverse association between coffee intake and type 2 diabetes after adjustment for age, body mass index, and other risk factors. Total caffeine intake from coffee and other sources was associated with a statistically significantly lower risk for diabetes in both men and women. These data suggest that long-term coffee consumption is associated with a statistically significantly lower risk for type 2 diabetes.

Coffee and Physical Fitness

The amounts of water, carbohydrate and salt that athletes are advised to consume during exercise are based upon their effectiveness in preventing both fatigue as well as illness due to hyperthermia, dehydration or hyper hydration. The old issues concerning coffee and caffeine were that it acts as a diuretic, thus causing more fluid loss during activity. Studies have caused researchers to re think this point. These studies suggest that consuming caffeine does not have this effect and can even have beneficial effects on keeping the body fit.

Caffeine does not improve maximal oxygen capacity directly, but could permit the athlete to train at a greater power output and/or to train longer. It has also been shown to increase speed and/or power output in simulated race conditions. These effects have been found in activities that last as little as 60 seconds or as long as 2 hours. There is less information about the effects of caffeine on strength; however, recent work suggests no effect on maximal ability, but enhanced endurance or resistance to fatigue. There is no evidence that caffeine ingestion before exercise leads to dehydration, ion imbalance, or any other adverse effects.

What about the negative effects of coffee?

Coffee is enjoyed as a drink by millions of people worldwide. It contains caffeine, which is a mild stimulant, and in many people coffee enhances alertness, concentration and performance. Although it contains a wide variety of substances, it is generally accepted that caffeine is responsible for many of coffee's physiological effects. Because caffeine influences the central nervous system in a number of ways and because a small number of people may be particularly sensitive to these effects, some people have attributed coffee to all sorts of health problems.

Caffeine is not recognized as a drug of abuse and there is no evidence for caffeine dependence. Some particularly sensitive people may suffer mild symptoms of withdrawal after sudden abstinence from coffee drinking. A 150ml cup of instant coffee contains about 60mg caffeine, filtered coffee slightly more; for those who like coffee but are sensitive to caffeine, the decaffeinated beverage contains only 3mg per cup.

Coffee drinking can help asthma sufferers by improving ventilator function.

There is no evidence that coffee drinking is a risk for the development of cancer. For several types of cancer there is disagreement between studies but again, other aspects of lifestyle may be implicated. There is even a strong suggestion that coffee may have a protective effect against colon cancer. A possible explanation may lie in the many antioxidant substances present in coffee and which are currently subjects of active research.

In some sensitive individuals, ingestion of coffee after a period of abstinence may cause a temporary rise in blood pressure but there is no hypertensive effect in the long term. Coffee made by the

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Scandinavian method of boiling or by the cafetiere method may cause mild elevation of plasma cholesterol concentration in some people, but instant, filter coffee, and liquid coffee extract have no such effects. Overall there is no influence of coffee drinking on heart disease risk.

There is no sound scientific evidence that modest consumption of coffee has any effects on outcomes of pregnancy or on the wellbeing of the child. Bone health is not affected by coffee drinking. Adverse effects in some published studies have been attributed to aspects of lifestyle that are often shared by coffee drinkers, such as smoking and inactivity. Coffee drinking can help asthma sufferers by improving ventilator function.

There is no reason for people who are prone to ulcers to avoid coffee.

Research continues and must be subjected to critical scrutiny and re-evaluation. At the present time, there is no reason to forego the pleasurable experience of moderate coffee drinking for health reasons. Go ahead... Have a cup of delicious coffee!

Hilda Maria is a stay at home mother of five, who enjoys writing about coffee [<http://www.ic-coffee-makers.com/index.html>] and giving custom coffee mugs [http://www.ic-coffee-makers.com/coffee_mugs.html] and coffee cups [http://www.ic-coffee-makers.com/coffee_cups.html] as gifts!

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