

TerranearPMC Safety Share

Week of June 12, 2017 – Coffee!

Coffee has become big money. Companies like Starbucks and Peet's (made famous by Judge Ito during the OJ Simpson Trial) are Bullish on the NASDAQ stock market. It's almost like a Renaissance. Communities in South America, Africa and Indonesia, where the coffee plant thrives, now have viable economies where only decades earlier, their plantations were worth only beans.

As the story goes, the discovery of coffee dates back to 11th Century Ethiopia where a goat herder named Kaldi noticed his goats eating berries from a certain tree and became so energetic that they did not want to go to sleep at night. Kaldi told his story to the abbot of the local monastery who then proceeded to make a drink with these same berries. The results were similar to Kaldi's goats; that is, the drink kept him alert through the long hours of evening prayer. The abbot shared his discovery with the other monks at the monastery and knowledge of the energizing berries began to spread. As word moved east, coffee reached the Arabian Peninsula and by the 14th century Yemen was steeped in coffee cultivation. Next, the coffee bean made its way to Istanbul and by 1555, during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (the Ottoman ruler known for his siege of Vienna), the beverage had grown in popularity so that Turkish coffee soon spread to Europe. The renowned composer, J.S. Bach, was such a coffee enthusiast that he even wrote the secular work, The Coffee Cantata. At the same time doctors were proclaiming coffee to be a miracle drug.

And today, ask any coffee drinker and they'll tell you that coffee has worthwhile benefits beyond the pleasant aroma and the morning pick-me-up as there is growing evidence that our coffee habits could actually be impacting our health... for the better! Well, that sounds good. But if true, how so?

There's growing evidence that coffee boosts dopamine production in the brain (a neurotransmitter that plays a major role in reward-motivated behavior). One study found that women who drank four or more cups of coffee every day were 20 percent less likely to suffer from depression. Another study found that coffee drinkers were half as likely to attempt suicide. It has also been shown that people who drink a lot of coffee are less likely to develop type 2 diabetes than people who drink smaller amounts, or no coffee at all. According to the Harvard Medical School, this is because it contains ingredients that lower blood sugar. However, at this time, the specific ingredient which causes this effect is not known. Because the effects can actually be stronger with decaffeinated coffee, it's probably not caffeine. Some researchers suggest that it's the antioxidants, and that brewing method plays a major role.

In another Harvard study, it has been observed that two or more cups of coffee each day could protect against heart failure. Researchers found that people who drank four cups of coffee each day had an 11 percent lower risk. Other studies have found that drinking larger intakes of coffee, as well as green tea, can lower most people's risk of stroke and cardiovascular disease. Interestingly, women seem to reap this benefit to a greater extent than men.



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It also looks like caffeine in coffee may be beneficial to those who have Parkinson's disease to manage their uncontrollable movements. In addition, they are current studies that suggest that having a higher intake of coffee is associated with a lower risk of Parkinson's altogether. However, Harvard Medical School says these benefits may be limited to men.

Gallstones are painful, but coffee could help keep them at bay. A study conducted in Italy found that people who regularly drink coffee or wine, or who eat fish or whole wheat bread, are less likely to develop gallstones. However, most researchers agree that the evidence for this relationship still needs a little more validation.

Several studies have linked coffee consumption to liver health. Many researchers agree that the type of coffee you drink matters. Filtered coffee, for example, is believed to be more hepatoprotective (liver-protecting) because filters prevent substances like kahweol and cafestol from reaching your mug. These substances may cause a rise in liver enzymes, although one study seems to refute this. Espresso, meanwhile, contains sucrose, which can increase the severity of fatty liver disease.

Coffee consumption has also been linked to a 50 percent reduced risk of liver cancer. Several studies confirm that coffee drinking significantly lowers your risk for liver cancer, especially if you are a man. This is thought to be partially because coffee stops the expression of genes that cause inflammation, especially in the liver. Additional studies have linked the hot beverage to reduced rates of breast, colon, and rectal cancers too.

When did all these benefits for coffee consumption happen? It may be that earlier studies; those that suggested a link between coffee and poor health, did not take into account that in the past, coffee drinkers also tended to have high-risk behaviors, such as smoking and physical inactivity.

Coffee could very well deliver a wealth of benefits, but don't fill up just yet. Some research has tied drinking large amounts of unfiltered coffee like espresso to increased cholesterol levels, most likely due to cafestol. Also, if you're sensitive to caffeine, jumping on the coffee bandwagon could bring unpleasant side effects like anxiousness, nausea, and headaches.

In addition, some studies found that two or more cups of coffee a day can increase the risk of heart disease in people with a specific — and fairly common — genetic mutation that slows the breakdown of caffeine in the body. So, how quickly you metabolize coffee may affect your health risk. In addition, high consumption of unfiltered coffee (boiled or espresso) has been associated with mild elevations in cholesterol levels.

Keep in mind that adding cream and sugar to your coffee adds fat and calories: up to hundreds of calories in some cases. And of course, to all you Starbucks fans, the benefits of coffee do not necessarily carry over to those drinks like Mocha Frappuccinos or other concoctions that are just exotic terms for a milkshake!

Nature does nothing uselessly

Aristotle

