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Having a Healthy Relationship – with Coffee

If you are a tea lover or energy drink fanatic, then this article may not be for you. But you might discover in this podcast how your genetics play a role in your caffeine metabolism, regardless of the caffeine source.

[Don't get the jitters — keep up a healthy relationship with caffeine using these tips](#)

If you are a one-cup-a-day java fan to a bottomless-mug coffee devotee, then read on.

Many people reach for their morning coffee because of caffeine, [the most widely consumed psychoactive drug](#) in the world. When consumed responsibly, coffee can offer many health benefits for most people.

Health Benefits of Coffee

According to the John Hopkins University School of Medicine, coffee contains not only caffeine which has health benefits, but also antioxidants and other active substances that may reduce internal inflammation and protect against disease. The top health benefits of drinking coffee include:

- Lower likelihood of death from coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and kidney disease
- Lower risk of heart failure and type 2 diabetes
- Lower likelihood of Parkinson's disease as well as helping those with the condition to better control their movements
- Liver protection
- Decreased breakage (related to dark roast) of DNA strands which occur naturally, and can lead to cancer or tumours if not repaired by your cells

- Reduced odds of colon cancer
- Possible decreased risk of Alzheimer's disease
- Decreased risk of stroke

To learn more, [read this article](#) from John Hopkins Medicine

Cautions

We often equate the consumption of caffeine with energy. Consuming caffeine can result in a feeling of increased energy, alertness, focus, and improvement to mood and cognitive performance. However, these effects are not the same as providing your body with the true energy gained by food, nor can caffeine be a substitute for adequate sleep.

Extreme caffeine intake, or over-indulgence in coffee, can lead to health concerns. Women who drink more than three cups a day may be at risk of bone fractures as they age. Regular use of more than 600 mg of caffeine may cause short term effects including:

- insomnia
- jitters
- anxiousness
- fast heart rate
- upset stomach
- nausea
- headache
- a feeling of unhappiness (dysphoria)

Or long-term effects such as:

- chronic insomnia
- constant anxiety
- depression

- stomach problems
- possible high blood pressure or elevation of existing high blood pressure

What you add to your coffee can have additional health effects – good or bad. Cinnamon is a tasty and healthy boost, but too much sugar or cream can add significant carbohydrate and fat calories to your beverage. Over time, this can create other health concerns.

Recommended coffee intake

As a starting point, the Food and Drug Administration suggests [a maximum of 400 milligrams of caffeine a day](#) for the average person – that's roughly the amount of caffeine in four, 8-ounce cups of coffee. This will vary, depending on how sensitive you are to the effects of caffeine and the speed of your metabolism in breaking down the caffeine.

You can become mildly dependent on caffeine from regularly drinking two to four cups of coffee a day. You may even experience withdrawal symptoms if you skip your daily dose, or if you stop cold turkey! Symptoms include:

- headaches
- problems sleeping
- feeling irritable, tired, and depressed
- lack of energy
- feeling down
- having trouble focusing or concentrating

If you want to decrease your coffee intake, do it slowly to minimize withdrawal symptoms and to set yourself up for success. Start by reducing your daily coffee intake by half a cup for a week, then reduce by another half cup as tolerated.

Enjoy

Pour yourself a lovely, warm 'cup of joe' (ideally, if it is your first, second, or third of the day – perhaps not your ninth!). Enjoy the warm break it offers, and the many health benefits provided by an optimal daily dose of caffeine!



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If you would like to contribute or have ideas about what you would like to see in the ReFresh series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.

Other sources:

<https://coffeebi.com/2019/02/18/the-canadian-coffee-consumption-2019/#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20Coffee%20Association,other%20beverage%2C%20even%20tap%20water.>

<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Alberta/Pages/Substance-use-caffeine.aspx#:~:text=Regular%20use%20of%20more%20than,make%20high%20blood%20pressure%20worse.>

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/hsph-in-the-news/is-coffee-good-or-bad-for-your-health/#:~:text=Hu%20said%20that%20moderate%20coffee,their%20risk%20of%20early%20death.>