

Is Caffeine Good for Our Health?

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Course

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Drinking coffee has become an everyday ritual for many people. Many of them have one more cup during their lunchtime, then another one in the evening, and maybe even more. Coffee in the morning is now a popular cliché like English 5 o'clock tea. Many countries even have their own coffee customs. For example, visiting cafes has always been an essential part of people's lives in Austria. Many writers, musicians, politicians, philosophers, and scholars, including Sigmund Freud and Gustav Mahler, used to get together in cafes in Vienna at the beginning of the twentieth century. Balzac used to drink more than 20 cups of coffee a day, which helped him work more productively. Office workers also drink coffee to boost their moods and to feel more energetic. In Sweden, all workers are allowed to have a coffee break called "fika" twice a day. People gather around and chat with each other. We may think that people from countries where coffee beans are grown drink coffee more than others. The truth is that people from Scandinavia drink more coffee than anyone else. In Finland, one person consumes around 12kg of coffee per year (compared to 5.9kg in Italy, 4.2kg in the US, 2.8kg in the UK).

Such an increase in coffee consumption attracted scientific interest into the effects that caffeine can have on our health. Numerous researches show that caffeine can have both positive and negative effects. It is a well-known fact that coffee has a stimulating effect and makes you feel more energetic. Scientists also believe that coffee drinkers are less likely to have Parkinson's disease and cirrhosis. Coffee can also help you treat asthma, stop headaches, and help you cope with stress.

On the other hand, the stimulating effect of caffeine also has a negative side. It does not actually give you more energy; it just helps you use the energy you have in reserve. As a result, once the effect of caffeine is over, you may feel drowsy. Contrary to that, if you drink caffeine less than six hours before going to bed, especially if you do it regularly, you are likely to have problems with insomnia. Too much caffeine may also cause nervousness, irritability, muscle tremors, and an upset stomach.

As it usually happens, truth is somewhere in between. No matter what you eat or drink, you have to do it wisely. The same can be said about drinking coffee. People are all different, so the effect of caffeine may vary greatly. This is the main reason why we hear so many controversial and contentious facts about it. Factors that influence how caffeine is healthy for us are the rate of caffeine metabolism, our genetic characteristics, and the lifestyles we lead.

Coffee is not just a drink; it has already become a part of our culture. Some drink it because of the stimulating effect; some like the taste; for others, the process of grinding the beans and making coffee is calming and can be viewed as a modern ritual. As it often happens, we cannot define the point at which caffeine is not healthy and can damage our health. Therefore, we must pay attention to how we feel after a cup of coffee, to drink it the right way.

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