

Is Coffee Healthy?

Coffee is big business. Over 1 million cups are served daily in North America alone, and it is the most consumed beverage after water and the second most traded commodity after oil. Coffee is not just a habit, it's an addiction, and research studies are backing up people's desire to find nothing but good in the black elixir. It's very clear that coffee isn't going away anytime soon, but what isn't clear is if coffee is actually healthy. It's time to fully examine all sides of this contentious debate.

Congratulations! If you have made it this far, you actually want to know more about your coffee habit and the health implications (positive and negative). Either that, or you decided to take a peek during your coffee break to validate your coffee habit by browsing through this article to see all the good that pops up, while ignoring the rest.

It's okay; it's human nature. We typically don't like our habits to be questioned in any shape or form, and we often look for evidence to validate them. However, in this article, we are going to explore both sides of the coffee habit, and evaluate whether it is generally a good habit to have, not healthy at all, or if it depends on the individual.

Kudos if you are still with me...

So without further ado lets take a look at one of our greatest addictions, come to a conclusion on our coffee consumption, and explore any alternatives available to help us break the regular habit for good.

Coffee Consumption – The Good

There has been plenty of research of late suggesting coffee consumption (in specific moderation) has several health

benefits, which not only make it safe, but beneficial to drink on a consistent basis. Some of these health benefits that are being touted include:

- Reduced risk of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's
- Protective effect against type 2 diabetes
- Reduces risk of stroke
- Enhanced brain function
- Improved athletic performance

One of the key health components with coffee that helps with these conditions is its high antioxidant content.

Antioxidants are organic compounds such as vitamin A, C, and E, as well as beta carotene, lycopene and selenium, which are found in foods. Antioxidants are beneficial to the human body as they are scavengers of free radicals, which cause many systemic and health debilitating issues, such as chronic inflammation.

Coffee has also been shown to temporarily elevate energy and mood, as well as burn calories. Elson M. Haas M.D., author of *The New Detox Diet* states:

"A dosage of 50 to 100 mg caffeine, the amount in one cup of coffee, will produce a temporary increase in mental clarity and energy levels while simultaneously reducing drowsiness. It also improves muscular-coordinated work activity, such as typing. Through its CNS stimulation, caffeine increases brain activity; however, it also stimulates the cardiovascular system, raising blood pressure and heart rate. It generally speeds up our body by increasing our basal metabolic rate (BMR), which burns more calories. Caffeine also increases respiratory rates, and for people with tight airways, it can open breathing passages. Caffeine is also a diuretic and a mild laxative."

Dharma Singh Khalsa M.D., author of *Brain Longevity*, states the following about caffeine:

“Caffeine, in fact, is the most widely used cognitive-enhancement product in our society. Numerous tests have proved that, when used in moderate amounts, caffeine boosts concentration and alertness. Because it is a stimulant, it increases output of adrenaline, and can temporarily improve memory and mood.”

This is certainly the good news for coffee drinkers, but now, what about the side effects?

Coffee Consumption – The Bad

There has always been plenty of empirical data that conclusively shows that coffee consumption is generally not a good thing. For years, doctor would tell patients who were experiencing various symptoms that they should ‘cut back on the coffee’. This was just sage advice, and the patient typically knew that this is what they needed to do because their favourite addiction was causing a number of problems, including:

- Caffeine jitters and crash
- Inability to sleep properly
- Kidney and bladder problems (due to the diuretic effects of the caffeine)
- Adrenal fatigue, which is caused by stimulation and suppression of various hormones, that ultimately leads to severe hormonal imbalance and more serious health issues like prostate and breast cancer

The most significant issue created by coffee is adrenal fatigue due to the triggering of stress hormones in your body. This triggering makes your muscles tense, elevates blood sugar, speeds up pulse and respiration rates, and increases your state of panic and alertness.

To some of you, this may appear to be a good thing, but over a period of time, it is quite detrimental. Consider the

following analogy by Stephen Cherniske, author of *Caffeine Blues*:

"Imagine you lived in a country that was always under threat of attack. No matter where you went, there was a perpetual state of alert. Not only that, but your defenses were constantly being depleted and weakened. Does that sound stressful? Caffeine produces the same effect on your body, like fighting a war on multiple fronts at the same time."

Cherniske calls your body's constant state of alert "caffeinism," which is characterized by fatigue, anxiety, mood swings, sleep disturbance, irritability, and depression.

Ironically, most people drink coffee due to the energy it provides them on a daily basis. However, over the long term, it actually depletes your energy, which is a seriously ironic kick in the pants. Pat Goudey, author of *The Unofficial Guide to Beating Stress*, states:

"Caffeine doesn't add energy to your system, it just burns up your reserves at a faster pace. You get a short-term boost at the expense of long-term jitters and fatigue."

But that's not all that coffee negatively effects. Michael Murray, N.D., points out:

"Caffeine depletes the body of B vitamins, which you need for proper brain and nervous system functioning and for converting food to energy, says Michael Murray, N.D., a naturopathic physician in Seattle and author of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Getting Well Naturally. To make matters worse, it also prevents iron absorption, says Dr. Murray, which can lead to anemia, a condition in which you have too few oxygen-carrying red blood cells and which is a major contributor to fatigue."

Mark Mayell, Author of *Off the Shelf Natural Health: How To Use Herbs and Nutrients To Stay Well*, piggybacks on Michael Murray's findings, stating the following:

“Although relatively safe, long-term use (of caffeine) in excess of 250 to 300 mg daily may cause numerous health problems. Caffeine has been known to raise blood-cholesterol levels, deplete B vitamins, irritate the stomach and bladder, exhaust the adrenals, and possibly lead to breast and prostate problems.”

This may not be an issue for those who drink only one cup of coffee a day, or is it? Cherniske writes:

“Careful research conducted by the department of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine shows that low to moderate caffeine intake (as little as one 14-ounce mug per day) can quickly produce withdrawal symptoms,” writes Cherniske.

With withdrawal symptoms, comes more chronic use. People would simply rather deal with their coffee habit, than try to deal with the headaches and migraines that can come with trying to kick the coffee habit. This roller coaster leads to long term coffee consumption, which continues to deplete the delicate adrenals, which throws hormones out of balance causing energy swings, fatigue, irritability, poor sleep, and breast and prostate issues.

So now that we have seen both sides of the argument, how do you make a logical, unemotional decision (which is difficult in a state of hormonal imbalance) about your coffee intake? You can attempt to examine your particular health situation soberly, and determine whether coffee is a habit you can safely continue.

People Who Can Drink Coffee in Moderation

There are certain people who can enjoy moderate (3-4 cups a week) coffee consumption. They are typically noted by the

following characteristics:

- Emotionally and physically balanced, with little to no hormonal problems (characterized by a constant and healthy level of energy, good sleep, pleasant disposition, and healthy weight)
- Consume a diet rich in organic fruits and vegetables (75% or more), that creates an optimal body pH and provides an abundance of various vitamins and minerals (to offset the acidity of coffee, and vitamin and mineral depletion)
- Consumes adequate amounts of quality water, that offsets the dehydration caused by the diuretic effects of caffeine

With these characteristics in place, the word moderation is still in effect. From the *Textbook of Natural Medicine* by Joseph E. Pizzorno and Michael T. Murray:

“Although acute caffeine consumption provides stimulation, regular caffeine intake may actually lead to chronic fatigue. While mice fed one dose of caffeine demonstrated significant increases in their swimming capacity, when the dose of caffeine was given for 6 weeks, a significant decrease in swimming capacity was observed.”

Due to this and many other observations, it's crucial that your caffeine uptake is limited.

It should be also noted, that adding refined sugars, conventional dairy, or artificial sweeteners puts a serious damper on any benefits you are receiving from your coffee. So go black or use healthier sugars and alternative dairy solutions for flavour.

People Who Should Severely Limit or

Eliminate Coffee

There are also certain people who should limit or drop the habit altogether (or look for alternatives that limit the uptake of caffeine). They are typically noted by the following characteristics:

- Emotionally and physically unbalanced, with more prevalent hormonal (adrenal) problems (characterized by poor energy or swings, inconsistent sleep, crankiness or irritability, anxiety, and an unhealthy weight)
- Consume a diet rich in grains, dairy, and meat (75% or more), that creates an acidic body pH
- Consumes inadequate amounts of quality water, exacerbating dehydration
- Has digestive issues, signalled by stomach pain, flatulence, bloating, and constipation (less than 1 well formed bowel movement a day)

How do you know if you have adrenal problems? Consider the following symptoms:

- Morning fatigue – you can't seem to 'wake up' for the first couple hours (which is why you need coffee)
- Mid-to-late afternoon low
- Sleepy at 9 to 10 p.m., but you often resist going to sleep
- You get second wind to stay up past 11 p.m., and usually end up going to sleep closer to 1 a.m.
- Crave foods high in salt and fat (fast food is a common choice)
- Depression
- Lack of energy
- Can't handle stress
- Weak muscles
- Light headed when getting up from sitting or laying down
- Decreased sex drive
- Frequent sighing

In addition to that, you can try the pupil dilation exam you can do at home with a flashlight and a mirror. Simply look into the mirror and shine the flashlight into the pupil of one eye. It should contract. If after 30 seconds it stays the same, or even worse, it dilates, you can be reasonably sure you have adrenal fatigue.

Turns Out, Coffee Can Be ALL Good

Enema

Perhaps this is not the orifice you were planning on using for your coffee intake. Coffee enemas can be quite beneficial for your health when done properly. Some of the benefits include:

- Reducing systemic toxicity up to 700 percent
- Cleansing and healing the colon and digestive tracts, and improving peristaltic action
- Boosts energy levels and increases mental clarity and mood
- Helps eliminate parasites and candida
- Helps detoxify and repair liver damage
- Relieves chronic pain, eases die off symptoms related to cleansing and detoxifying regimens
- Heals and prevents chronic illness

Perhaps they need to offer another service at the coffee shop to offset the effects of caffeine. I can hear it already..."Would you like another cup and an enema bag with that Americano?"

Sources for this article include:

- Adrenal Fatigue_and Chronic_Stress – Natural News
- The Hidden Dangers of Caffeine – Natural news
- Mounting Evidence Suggests Coffee May Actually Have Therapeutic Health Benefits – Mercola