

## The Buzz on Caffeine

We've all heard caffeine can be bad for us. Of course this is not something coffee-lovers like to hear, and new research is emerging every day proving the contrary.

So exactly how does caffeine affect the body? It first stimulates our central nervous system, increasing our heart rate, tightening our muscles and raising our glucose levels. For many, that doesn't resonate good health. But that is not all that happens to your body. Dopamine, the neurotransmitter that activates the pleasure portions of our brain becomes elevated, suggesting that caffeine boosts mood, helps decrease depression and contributes to weight loss. In addition, studies indicate that people who drink coffee on a regular basis are up to 80% less likely to develop Parkinson's, which further validates its link to Dopamine.

Caffeine has not only been shown to improve our mental performance but physical as well. Many athletes believe a bit of coffee prior to an event improves performance. Some even believe that during a prolonged exercise event, caffeine gives them a mental perk, increased focus and even refreshed motivation. Furthermore, the diuretic effect caffeine can have was once thought negative, but this actually has little validity. Studies show there are no changes in sweat loss, urine or body hydration status during exercise following the ingestion of caffeine.

The benefits of caffeine go on. Researchers have found that individuals who drink 2 cups of coffee per day were 44% less likely to have liver damage compared to those who didn't consume any caffeine. Other research shows that compared to not drinking coffee, at least two cups daily can translate to a 25% reduced risk of colon cancer, an 80% drop in liver cirrhosis risk, and nearly half the risk of gallstones.

### Other Benefits of Caffeine

1. Alleviation of pain
2. Improved breathing
3. Elimination of chronic fatigue
4. Prevention of liver disease
5. Increases muscle strength
6. Increases metabolism
7. Increases mental faculty
8. Reduction of asthma symptoms

While there are undoubtedly some negative effects of consuming too much caffeine, i.e., irritability, restlessness and anxiety, "Overall, the research shows that coffee is far more healthful than it is harmful," says Tomas DePaulis, PhD, research scientist at Vanderbilt University's Institute for Coffee Studies, which conducts its own medical research and tracks coffee studies from around the world. "For most people, very little bad comes from drinking it, but a lot of good."

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