

Coffee Talk: Heavy Consumption Can Trigger Harmful Physical Effects

Can we talk... about coffee? You love it, you need it, you can't live without it.

It keeps you going and gives you that extra "jolt" of energy that you need, right? The truth is, a lot of people are misled about the energizing benefits of coffee. Pardon the pun, but maybe it's time we woke up and smelled the coffee!

If you love your java, you're not alone. Over 400 billion cups of coffee are consumed every year, making it the world's most popular beverage. In the United States alone, about 107 million people—over 52 percent of the population—drink coffee every day. Another 57 million people drink coffee at least occasionally. (Reynolds School of Journalism, University of Nevada, Spring 2003). It used to be that coffee was just your grandparents' thing—the choice of an older generation. But today, the largest percentage of coffee drinkers is young adults age 18 to 39.

There's been much debate about the benefits and risks of coffee drinking overall. It's generally believed that for most people, there's "little overall risk in consuming up to three normal-sized (6-9 ounce) cups of coffee per day." (Consumer , May 2001).

But studies have shown that there are risks for heavy coffee drinkers, pregnant women, and possibly people with heartburn, breast lumps, or anxiety disorders. Heavy consumption may also pose a risk of increased cholesterol and blood homocysteine levels. It's also possible to become physically addicted to caffeine even within a short period of time.

But what about using coffee as an energy booster? Is coffee really helping to pick you up like you think it is? The main ingredient in coffee is caffeine, which acts as a central nervous system stimulant. Stimulants can give you a false feeling of energy, causing your body to experience a “spike and crash” syndrome. They can cause you to become restless and jittery.

When we rely on stimulants for our energy, we take our bodies on a sort of roller coaster ride. Many of us wake up tired and drag ourselves to the kitchen to make a pot of coffee. We drink that first cup and feel like we’ve been re-charged! But before we know it, we “crash.” You might have felt like you were on a peak, but then the artificial boost brought you crashing down like the proverbial roller coaster. And so we reach for another cup to pick us up again.

And the cycle goes on and on. It’s no wonder so many people reach a point in the middle of the afternoon where they feel so tired that they reach for a candy bar or a caffeinated soda ... or maybe yet another cup of coffee. We’re looking for that energy “high” again.

But this false energy from stimulants is not a healthy choice. It’s important to find healthy ways to energize ourselves; to keep optimal energy levels naturally and maintain an even keel throughout the day. If you’re using coffee as a “pick-me-up,” you’d be much better switching to a non-stimulant energy producer.

Many people use a natural substance from the beehive called Royal Jelly for added energy, stamina and vitality.* This type of “natural” energy is beneficial, because it does not put our bodies on a roller coaster ride from that “spike and crash” syndrome.

Generally speaking, if you’re a moderate coffee drinker—two to three cups of coffee per day—you probably have nothing to

worry about when it comes to your overall health. Heavy coffee drinkers can reduce health risks by switching to decaf—which is not a bad recommendation for all coffee drinkers.

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