

Have a Steaming Cup o' Death?

It's not the javaholics in danger now—it's the occasional sippers.

Just when we thought coffee was safe again, now cardiologists are saying that the occasional after-dinner cup of coffee is worse for the heart than drinking it every day.

The research is the first to show that the surge in blood pressure that a noncoffee-drinker experiences is worse than the potential long-term effects on a coffee addict.

The culprit isn't caffeine, but other ingredients in coffee that cause the blood vessels to contract. Regular coffee-drinkers are used to these effects, but in noncoffee-drinkers the sudden strain on their heart increases their risk of a heart attack, a cardiologist at the University of Zurich says.

Dr. Roberto Corti studied the effect on 15 volunteers of giving them a triple espresso, a decaffeinated triple espresso and an intravenous solution of caffeine. When they were given caffeine they experienced an elevated heart-rate and trembling hands. He found, however, that the blood pressure of the nonhabitual coffee-drinkers rose by six times as much as that of those who drank it habitually. This did not occur when the patients were injected with caffeine, but decaffeinated coffee had the same damaging effect.

This effect is said to be caused by substances called theobromines which give coffee its flavor, but also act as stimulants that have powerful effects on the heart.

*Source: The Times of London,
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