

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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## Did You Remember the Coffee?

Or maybe it's the other way around, Drink your coffee to remember! At least that is a possible conclusion of a long term study in Scandinavia. People who drank more coffee, at least 3 cups a day, over an average of 21 years, ended up with less Alzheimer's disease and less dementia when they got older. Other recent research says a couple cups of brew a day could help protect us from Parkinson's disease. And there's more evidence that coffee drinkers have less chance of a heart attack or a stroke. They might even have less chance of diabetes.

All that might seem hard to believe when we've been told for so many years that caffeine is bad for us. We can feel the jitters if we drink too much. Our head aches if we don't get our usual dose. Several extra cups send us running for the bathroom. How can the coffee that does all of that to us be good for us too?

The answer seems to be that there's more in coffee than just caffeine. The fact that decaf coffee helps as much as regular coffee is a hint that it's not the caffeine that is good for us. But the side effects of caffeine, the faster heart beat or the jittery hands, only last a little while. The ingredients that seem to be helpful keep working longer whether we feel them or not.

What are these good guy ingredients? Some of them are probably things called phenols but there may be many more we haven't identified yet. Whether these are actually positives, or whether they just cancel out the effects of the caffeine isn't clear.

We know that caffeine makes blood vessels tighten up and get thinner. So if they let the blood vessels stay relaxed the blood can flow more easily.

How much do you need to drink a day to get the benefits? In the study in Sweden and Finland the doctors found that the group of people who drank at least 3 to 5 cups a day had a lot fewer cases of dementia and Alzheimer's disease. The national average in Finland is about 10 cups a day, a lot more than our American average of 3. People who drank at least 10 cups a day had only one quarter the chance of getting Parkinson's disease compared to those who drank less. There's something in the coffee, caffeine or something else, that's affecting how the brain works and how it keeps on working over a lifetime.

With all the good news, there are still a few warnings about coffee. For one thing, our cappuccinos and lattes might not be in the 'good for us' category. Those drinks are usually made with unfiltered coffee. This unfiltered brew is still connected to higher LDL, the 'bad' cholesterol, levels. Filtering coffee takes out whatever it is that raises our cholesterol. It is still a good idea to limit yourself to only one or 2 a week of these beverages.

Also, there's still a lot of confusion about whether pregnant women should drink coffee. A single cup, maybe 2 a day, is not likely to be a problem. But the official position is that too much might increase a mother's risk of miscarriage. And who wants to put a baby through the headache of caffeine withdrawal? Parents don't get enough sleep as is, a cranky, fussy baby is no fun!

If you'd like your coffee in something other than a breakfast mug, here's a coffee custard. When it's cool pour into a graham cracker or chocolate cookie mini tart crusts

for an elegant dessert. Or if you must, just divide it into 4 small bowls and enjoy it like pudding. A few slivered almonds or chopped pecans on top make a tasty garnish.

### Coffee Custards

1 1/2 cups milk, low fat preferably	1/2 cup sugar
1/4 cup all purpose flour	3 eggs
2-3 teaspoons instant coffee crystals	1/2 tsp vanilla extract

Heat milk in small saucepan, do not boil. In second small pan combine sugar, flour and coffee crystals until there are no lumps. Add the eggs and stir until there are no lumps. Put saucepan on low heat and gradually stir in the hot milk. Keep stirring over low heat until the mixture gets thick. Remove from heat, stir in vanilla extract, and keep stirring for a few more minutes. Allow to cool slightly, then pour into tart crusts or dessert dishes. Serve cold as tarts, warm or cold as custard. Serves 4-6.

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