

PENNY SAVER NEWS

April 25, 2013

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A Morning Cup of Health?

Whether you can face the day without a steaming cup of coffee or not, should you be drinking it for your health? After decades of being called bad for us, coffee is now getting a reputation as a health drink. So should you, or should you not, be drinking coffee? Spoiler alert - drink it if you like it! If you don't, then don't.

Unless you haven't had a cup of coffee in years, you don't need to worry about it driving up your blood pressure. After we've been drinking it for a couple of months any effect on our blood pressure goes and the pressure drops. Three cups a day, probably more for some people, won't cause you problems in the blood pressure department. Of course if you're downing a couple quarts a day, that might!

Ulcers were also long blamed on too much coffee. Now we recognize that most ulcers are probably caused by stomach bacteria. Most are treated successfully with antibiotics. So we can take that worry off the list too. If you like coffee, drink it!

On the other hand, the list of things that coffee might help is growing almost daily. You can find at least one study somewhere that claims to show that coffee will protect you from everything from Alzheimer's disease to Parkinson's, with cancer, diabetes, liver and stroke along the way. The questions are: How good were the studies? How much coffee would you need to drink? and: What's in the coffee that's doing that? We don't have all those answers yet.

Most of the time when we think about the effects of coffee on our bodies we think of the caffeine. Coffee is the main source of caffeine in our diets, and caffeine is the most common 'drug' used in the world. But the experts estimate that coffee probably has at least 1,000 chemicals that do something in or to our bodies. A lot of them are front-runners too for the sources of both protection and risk.

Caffeine probably is the main ingredient that protects us against Parkinson's disease. Caffeine works in the brain to stop the changes that cause Parkinson's. Men who drink 3-4 cups of coffee a

day have a lower risk of getting Parkinson's. Women aren't helped as much for some reason. If you like it, drink it!

Antioxidants in coffee can also help protect us against damaging chemicals in our blood. But some of them seem to cause damage too. So they're not all good, nor all bad. Chlorogenic acid is one antioxidant that does both. It helps even out glucose and insulin levels - good! And it promotes clogging of the arteries - bad. Caffeine also increases the risk of clogged arteries. At this stage of the research, it does seem that coffee drinkers have a slightly lower risk of diabetes, but maybe a bit higher risk of atherosclerosis. If you like coffee, drink it!

Other ingredients in coffee also raise cholesterol. The good news on them is that most are removed if you make filtered coffee. They get caught on the filters. So save the French press and Turkish coffees for rare occasions, and drink filtered coffee most of the time.

As for protection against Alzheimer's disease, Harvard doctors say there are just 'hints of protection'. So don't guzzle gallons of coffee to save your memory! Coffee also raises the levels of homocysteine in our blood, and that's tied to more atherosclerosis. But people, especially women, who drink 1 to 3 cups of coffee a day have a slightly lower risk of heart attack. Which effect is stronger or more important has not yet been determined. If you like coffee, drink it!

Add to all this confusion the facts that how much caffeine and other ingredients your cup of coffee has depends on the beans, how they were roasted, and how the coffee was made. You could be getting plenty, or nothing. So if you like coffee, drink it! If you don't, then don't use it. But either way, don't expect miracles from it. If all of this has convinced you that you need more coffee, here's a cool and easy coffee dessert. Prepare a day ahead for an easy time at dinner. Enjoy!

Coffee Soufflé

1 ½ cups coffee	3 eggs, separated
1 Tbsp unflavored gelatin	¼ tsp salt
2/3 cup sugar	½ tsp vanilla extract
½ cup low fat milk	whipped topping

Mix coffee, gelatin, 1/3 cup sugar and milk in double boiler. Heat over boiling water while stirring until it starts to thicken. Add slightly beaten egg yolks, remaining sugar and salt. Continue cooking until thick. Set aside to cool. Beat egg whites and vanilla until stiff. Fold gently into thickened coffee mixture. Pour into bowl or Bundt pan and refrigerate until set. To unmold dip bowl or pan into hot water just briefly. Put a plate on top of bowl or pan, hold firmly and flip over. Serve in slices with whipped topping. Serves 6.

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