

Can Coffee Every Day Keep the Doctor Away?

As the old adage goes, an apple a day keeps the doctor away. But the apple may not be alone. A [recent study](#) presented at the American College of Cardiology's Annual Scientific Session indicates two to three cups of coffee could also do the trick.

Researchers compiled ten years of survey data from nearly half a million coffee drinkers, and discovered that drinking coffee – specifically two to three cups a day – is associated with a lower risk of heart disease, heart arrhythmia and also with living longer. This data held true for both people with and without preexisting cardiovascular disease.

“What they found is that for people who drink two to three cups of coffee a day, it either had a neutral effect – meaning it did not cause harm – or 10 to 20% improvement in cardiovascular health: less risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, heart failure,” explains Dr. Sudhir Mungee, an interventional cardiologist with OSF HealthCare Cardiovascular Institute. (:22)

Dr. Mungee thinks the reason behind these finding lies in the power of the coffee bean. Coffee beans have multiple biologically active compounds, including some that can reduce oxidative stress and inflammation, both of which can play a role in cardiovascular health.

“A decrease in inflammation in the body and cardiovascular disease or stroke or heart failure or heart attacks are all related to a state of inflammation. So if there is a biologically active product in coffee beans that reduces oxidative stress, oxidative injury, or reduces inflammation in your body, it probably will have an impact on positive heart health,” Dr. Mungee says. (:27)

No matter the coffee type consumed – instant, regular or decaf – the benefits were seen across the board in study participants.

While this data is good news for coffee drinkers, Dr. Mungee says it isn't a sole reason to start a java habit. He says anyone who gets anxiety, palpitations or insomnia from coffee shouldn't start drinking it for the sole reason of decreasing their heart disease risk.

“What the study is saying is that if you're a coffee drinker, and if you drink two to three cups of coffee a day, you don't have to stop. Even if you had a heart problem, because they actually looked at people who didn't have a heart problem, it benefited those, and people who had heart problems didn't worsen if they were to take coffee. So I think it's an important message that - okay, don't start it for the wrong reason, but if you're taking it, feel good about it. It's not going to hurt you.” (:27)

On top of the natural coffee bean benefits, Dr. Mungee believes there is another factor in the study's findings. People who drink a moderate amount of two to three cups of coffee a day might have tendencies to do other things in moderation as well.

“Coffee in moderation means you're also doing other things in moderation,” he says. “Moderation in exercise, moderation in how much you eat. So I think there is a subtle message about that lifestyle - how you're taking care of yourself.” (:22)

If you have questions about your habits and how they relate to heart health you should speak with your primary care physician, or take the free heart risk assessment at osfhealthcare.org/heart.