

Script – Print – Sip smart: coffee supports your heart

Are you the type of person who can't wait to kickstart your day with that piping-hot cup of coffee in the morning? If so, there's good news for you.

According to a recent [study](#) published in the European Heart Journal, one perk of morning coffee is it's healthier for you than any other part of the day.

Early risers – coffee connoisseurs who pour their first cup of java between 4 a.m. and noon – have a 16% lower chance of dying from any cause compared to non-coffee drinkers.

According to the study, coffee drinkers also had a 31% lower risk of dying from heart disease compared to non-coffee drinkers.

"The study identified that one of the aspects of coffee lowers inflammation, and we have more inflammation in the morning. And so that's why the benefit was shown in this study," says Nancy Dagefoerde, a nurse practitioner with OSF HealthCare Cardiovascular Institute. "I do agree that that's a good benefit of drinking coffee in the morning."

The findings were the result of work done by researchers from Tulane University who analyzed dietary and health data from 40,000 adults between 1999 and 2018. The research team studied two groups – morning-only coffee drinkers and all-day coffee drinkers.

Researchers focused on patterns of drinking coffee throughout the day rather than the amount of coffee consumed. Dagefoerde recommends drinking no more than two or three cups a day.

Another important aspect of coffee is how it's made. Past studies have shown evidence of a link between coffee brewing methods, heart attacks and longevity. For example, unfiltered coffee that's boiled contains higher amounts of chemicals that can raise triglyceride levels and low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol levels.

"Filtered coffee is more beneficial. Boiled coffee can actually be more harmful. There are many compounds in coffee that are beneficial to health in general," says Dagefoerde.

But a cup of brew isn't everything when it comes to heart health. Dagefoerde says there are other things you should be doing including exercising, treating your blood pressure and cholesterol.

"Coffee can lower inflammation, increase your metabolism and decrease the absorption of fats," she adds. "But you definitely want to work on all your risk factors, not just drinking coffee."

It's better to drink black coffee, but if you take it with sugar or cream, make sure you are using the ones that are as healthy as possible such as unsweetened almond milk, coconut milk, raw honey or cinnamon. Cream adds 50 calories and three grams of saturated fat per tablespoon. And a teaspoon of sugar contains 16 calories, which adds up quickly.

Dagefoerde says while the studies are encouraging, it doesn't mean you should race to your local coffee shop and start guzzling mugs of java purely for the health benefits.

"Coffee is popular in our nation, and in many countries. And the social aspect is nice too," she says. "But don't overdo it and just know the risks if you do."