

Coffee and bananas: Monkey business or miracle brew?

Some social media users are going bananas over a different take on your morning cup of joe.

While many “health” trends have no substance at all, this has promise, according to Gabrielle Haskell, a clinical dietitian for oncology at the OSF Cancer Institute.

The recipe calls for one to two frozen bananas, one cup of coffee, 1/3 cup of milk and two pitted dates. Mix it together in a blender and you have a frappe to enjoy.

So... why bananas?

“Bananas have fiber in them, which helps keep you fuller for longer. Fiber is good for blood sugar management and for management of your cholesterol,” Haskell says. “They also have added vitamins and minerals, like Vitamin C, that can really help boost your immune system.”

The American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) [recommends](#) a plant-based diet for cancer prevention. Haskell describes how fruits, like bananas, all play a role.

“By adding more plants to your food, you’re reducing your risk of cancer, and adding in phytochemicals and antioxidants,” Haskell says.

Phytochemicals are part of the plant’s immune system and offer the plant, and the person eating it, protection from viruses, bacteria, fungi and parasites. *Antioxidants* are things like Vitamin E and C that help fight off harmful free radicals, which have been linked to diabetes and cancer.

The frozen banana doesn’t just add nutritional benefits to the drink, it also provides a creamy texture that is easier to enjoy. See it as an alternative to coffee creamer. It also adds sweetness, so you can say goodbye to those packets of sugar, too.

“Traditional coffee creamers have a lot of added sugars and oils in them,” Haskell says. “The bananas, milk and dates are really replacing the coffee creamer to add sweetness and creaminess to it.”

Minimizing caffeine intake during cancer treatment

The jury is still out on how coffee impacts cancer risk. The American Cancer Society (ACS) [reports](#) that some studies have shown coffee lowering the risk of liver and endometrial cancers, as well as mouth, throat, voice box and basal skin cell cancer in both men and women. However, other studies suggest drinking hot beverages like coffee may increase your risk of esophageal cancer, causing ACS to recommend not drinking any beverage at very high temperatures.

Dr. Fredericka Brown and Dr. Kenneth Diller, mechanical engineering professors at the University of Texas at Tyler, researched what the optimal hot beverage temperature is. Their findings [showed](#) that hot drinks should be served between 125°F and 136°F.

During cancer treatment, Haskell says caffeinated beverages are not recommended at all.

“Caffeine can increase your risk for dehydration,” Haskell says. “And specifically with caffeinated coffee, if patients drink that when they’re doing certain treatments, symptoms like nausea and acid reflux might be heightened. It’s best to try and reduce your consumption of caffeine as much as possible. If you want, you can swap out regular caffeinated coffee in this recipe for a decaf instead.”

This recipe is another way to make use of those VERY ripe bananas you have laying out on the kitchen counter, hanging on for dear life. There’s no judgment here. Just throw them in the freezer and give them a new, healthier purpose than just attracting fruit flies.