eat right LIVE WELL

Coffee:
More than caffeine

Coffee is one of the most consumed beverages in the world, so it seems logical to ask – Is coffee good for us? Some studies show benefit and others don't. So what is the bottom line with coffee?

Coffee Benefits:

Studies have found evidence that coffee can help protect us from a variety of illnesses. Aside from the obvious caffeine boost, which we like for the pick-me-up, coffee contains other beneficial compounds. A recent study found that people who drank four or more cups of coffee per day may lower their risk of melanoma as much as 20%, possibly due to protection from sun damage. Other studies have found that coffee drinkers have lower risk for other cancers, heart disease and even live longer overall.

Coffee Risks:

While the overall research suggests that coffee has benefits, not everyone responds to coffee or the caffeine it contains in the same way. People with high blood pressure and pregnant women should consider limiting their overall caffeine intake and children should not consume highly caffeinated beverages due to safety concerns. If you tend to get heartburn or migraines it is worth looking at whether coffee (or caffeine in general) could be a trigger.

Bottom Line:

Feel free to enjoy that morning (and afternoon) cup of coffee. Unless you have a specific medical reason to limit coffee or caffeine in general, it seems the potential benefits currently outweigh the risks. To get the most from your coffee, limit the add ins like sugars and syrups that can make the extra calories add up quickly. If you're not a coffee drinker, you probably don't need to start for health reasons, but if you do, take it slowly. Caffeine can make you feel a little jittery if you aren't used to it.

REFERENCES:

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