Nutrition Fact Sheet

Coffee

Health benefits of coffee

The physiological effects of coffee come mainly from caffeine and its high concentration of antioxidants such as polyphenols.

Effect on the central nervous system

Caffeine's effect on the nervous system is well-established. It improves reaction and concentration and at the same time delays fatigue. This is one of the reasons it is being studied to counteract the effects of jet lag. It may also have an influence on the rate of learning for certain tasks and acts as a global stimulant on the metabolism. For example, we know that caffeine helps cyclists and long-distance runners to improve their speed performance.

Effect on the cardiovascular system

Coffee is sometimes linked to certain cardiovascular problems such as high cholesterol levels. Responsible for this effect are the coffee oils (diterpenes) contained in unfiltered coffee such as Turkish coffee or Nordic-style boiled coffee. They can be easily eliminated by using filtration paper for coffee brews or using soluble coffee.

For moderate coffee consumption (3–5 cups per day) no other supposed effects have been demonstrated. But there are so-called "caffeine-sensitive" individuals, whose blood-pressure rises when they ingest caffeine. However, the increase in blood pressure for these individuals is usually quite low and lasts only about one hour. Coffee is therefore no longer seen as a risk factor for high blood pressure.

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Coffee: Rich in antioxidants

Coffee is a major source of dietary antioxidants, mainly polyphenols. They help fight free radicals and oxidative damage and may reduce the risk of certain chronic or degenerative diseases such as cancers, type 2 diabetes, inflammation and liver disease. Emerging evidence also indicates the possible positive impact of coffee on neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease.

GOOD TO KNOW

Coffee no longer considered to be dehydrating

Reworked interpretations of existing scientific studies show that coffee is no longer considered to be dehydrating, as it only decreases the extracellular water and has no effect on the intracellular liquid (the water in the cells). As coffee is also virtually free of calories, moderate coffee consumption (3–5 cups a day) can thus contribute positively to the recommended daily liquid intake within a diversified and balanced diet.