



COFFEE

a real eye-opener



Every culture the world over enjoys some type of caffeinated beverage, be it tea in England and China, espresso in Italy, or a Frappuccino in the United States. What role does coffee play in a healthy diet?

Q: IS COFFEE BAD FOR ME? WILL IT HURT MY HEALTH?

Since coffee is so widely consumed, it has been extensively researched. On the plus side, coffee drinkers might have a lower risk of diabetes and Parkinson's disease. According to leading health experts, normal coffee consumption produces no adverse health effects.

The biggest health worries about coffee have to do with the following habits:

- Adding cream, butter or coffee whiteners containing coconut or palm oil ('bulletproof' anyone?!) These add saturated fat and can contribute to heart disease. Switch to milk or powdered milk.
- Drinking coffee instead of eating a wholesome breakfast. Many people who say they "live on coffee" could easily drink much less if they would eat a satisfying and nutritious breakfast and lunch. Food is better fuel than caffeine.
- Drinking coffee to stay alert. A good night's sleep might be a better investment. You could also try drinking a tall glass of ice water to perk yourself up. Sometimes dehydration contributes to fatigue.

Q: WHAT DOES COFFEE DO TO MY BODY?

The caffeine in coffee is a mild stimulant that increases the activity of the central nervous system. It helps you stay alert and enhances mental focus. Caffeine's stimulant effect peaks in about an hour then declines as the liver breaks it down.

If you drink too much coffee, you start to get adverse effects. Caffeine jitters, acid reflux and anxiety may follow.

Q: HOW MUCH CAFFEINE DO COKE AND PEPSI HAVE COMPARED WITH COFFEE?

A can of cola averages 35 to 50 milligrams of caffeine. This is far less than the typical mug of coffee, which averages about 200 milligrams. The real kick from soft drinks comes from sugar, not caffeine.

Q: IF I DRINK TOO MUCH ALCOHOL, WILL COFFEE HELP ME SOBER UP?

No. Coffee will just make you a wide awake drunk. Coffee doesn't speed up the time needed for the liver to detoxify alcohol.

Q: DOES COFFEE COUNT TOWARDS MY DAILY FLUID NEEDS?

Yes. All fluids count – plain water, juice, soup, watermelon and even coffee. The rumour that coffee dehydrates people lacks scientific support (Armstrong 2002). Yes, coffee might make you urinate more in 2 hours, but not in 24 hours. Even during exercise in the heat, athletes can consume coffee and not be concerned about dehydration.