



Question:

If I have a lot of coffee, or caffeine, will this increase my risk of cancer?

Answer:

At least half of American adults report consuming coffee daily, with even higher amounts being consumed in European and South American countries. Even at this level of caffeine intake, drinking coffee has not been found to be associated with an increased risk of cancer; in fact, coffee intake appears to be associated with either no effect on cancer risk or a decrease in cancer risk.

Research has found coffee intake is considered moderately protective against the development of basal cell carcinoma, and reduces the risk of development of oral cavity and pharynx cancer, certain types of liver cancer, and endometrial cancer. Coffee is not reported to increase risk of breast, prostate, or lung cancer. In some studies regarding lung cancer and stomach cancer, heavy coffee consumption shows a slightly increased risk of developing lung cancer, though there are countless other studies that show it has no increased risk. Even with these results, it is thought that other behaviors, such as smoking, are more likely the cause of the increased risk of developing lung cancer or stomach cancer, not the coffee intake itself.

Coffee contains many compounds, including caffeine, but also phytonutrients and antioxidants such as flavonoids which are shown to have beneficial effects on health. That being said, both the quantity and type of caffeine consumed are important to think about. Excessive caffeine consumption can have an effect on blood pressure, heart rate, and anxiety. If you have high blood pressure, a rapid heart rate, or other heart-related issues, *please talk to your doctor about how much caffeine is safe for you.*

Also keep in mind that the source of caffeine matters. Getting your caffeine from unsweetened coffee and tea is a better choice than soda, energy drinks, or highly sweetened drinks that happen to contain coffee. While these things also contain caffeine, they also contain excess amounts of

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added sugar or artificial sweeteners, which have not been shown to have any positive health effects and are best consumed, if at all, in moderation.

Ultimately, whether you enjoy a morning cup (or two) of coffee every day or the occasional latte on a Sunday morning brunch, coffee can be a healthy part of a balanced diet.

Question and answer originally submitted by Suzanne Dixon, MPH, MS, RD, on behalf of the ON DPG

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References

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