Can Coffee Reduce the Risk of Certain Liver Cancers?

Researchers show that drinking up to five cups of joe a day may prevent the most common form of liver cancer.

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If you're a diehard coffee lover, here's another reason to indulge. Recent findings show that drinking one cup of coffee each day can reduce a person's risk of hepatocellular cancer (HCC) by 20 percent, and five cups could lower that risk by half, according to a recent study published in BMJ Open, reports Medical News Today.

Although there are four types of primary liver cancers, HCC is the most common form found in adults. The cancer mostly affects people living with hepatitis B or C, diabetes or certain liver conditions, such as non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. (The American Cancer Society estimates that 40,710 new cases of liver cancer will be reported this year.)

For the study, researchers at the University of Southampton and the University of Edinburgh reviewed data from 26 observational studies that included more than 2.25 million adult coffee and non–coffee drinkers. To determine how coffee drinking affected HCC risk, scientists noted how many cups of the pick-me-up participants drank every day.

Results showed that the more caffeinated coffee a person consumed, the less likely he or she was to be diagnosed with HCC, even if the individual had a preexisting liver disease. Additionally, researchers concluded that decaffeinated coffee also lowered the risk of HCC, but to a lesser extent.

"We're not suggesting that everyone should start drinking five cups of coffee a day, though," said Oliver Kennedy, MD, the study's lead author. "There needs to be more investigation into the potential harms of high coffee-caffeine intake, and there is evidence it should be avoided in certain groups, such as pregnant women. Nevertheless, our findings are an important development given the increasing evidence of HCC globally and its poor prognosis."

Scientists suggested that antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and anti-carcinogenic compounds in coffee might explain the link between drinking java and a lower risk of liver cancer. But researchers cautioned that there isn't enough available data to show that knocking back more

than five cups each day would have the same effect.

Click here to read more about the health effects of drinking coffee.

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