Coffee May Protect Against Alcoholic Hepatitis

Among heavy drinkers, those in a recent study who drank coffee regularly had a lower rate of the liver disease.

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A few cups of coffee a day may ward off alcoholic hepatitis among those who drink heavily.

Researchers presented findings from a study of 340 heavy drinkers at the American College of Gastroenterology's annual meeting in Las Vegas.

The study included men who for the past five years drank an average of at least 60 grams of alcohol per day and women who drank at least 40 grams daily. A standard drink contains 14 grams of alcohol, so the men and women drank about four and three drinks per day, respectively.

A total of 190 of the participants had alcoholic hepatitis and 150 did not.

Twenty percent of those with alcoholic hepatitis said they regularly drank coffee, compared with 43 percent of those without the liver disease. The difference persisted even after the researchers controlled for various factors. Coffee consumption was associated with a 76 percent reduced likelihood of having alcoholic hepatitis.

Alcoholic hepatitis is not the same thing as viral hepatitis, including hepatitis B and C viruses (HBV/HCV). While research suggests that coffee can also protect against liver damage among those with hep B and C, clinicians generally warn this population not to drink alcohol at all because of the damage it can do to the organ.

To read the MedPage Today article, click here.

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