Yet Another Study Shows Drinking Coffee and Tea May Help Prevent Liver Disease

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Yet another study on the effects of coffee and tea on long-term liver health suggests that drinking three or more cups of a day of either beverage may help prevent progressive fibrosis, or stiffness of the liver — including among people who have not yet been diagnosed with a chronic liver disease, Medical News Today reports.

Recently published in the Journal of Hepatology, the new research expands on past experimental data showing that coffee has health benefits on liver enzyme elevations, viral hepatitis, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), cirrhosis and liver cancer. For this study, researchers at the Erasmus MC University Medical Center in Rotterdam in the Netherlands were curious to see whether the drinks would have a similar protective effect on liver stiffness in people without any underlying disease.

The Rotterdam University team examined the data available on 2,424 participants age 45 years and older living in the Netherlands. As part of the study, each participant underwent a full physical checkup, including measurements of body mass index (BMI), blood tests and abdominal scans for determining the degree of liver stiffness or scarring.

The participants' food and drinking habits were also assessed using a food frequency questionnaire, which included detailed items about their daily coffee and tea consumption. Ultimately, participants were divided into three categories according to their coffee and tea drinking patterns: no consumption, moderate tea and coffee consumption (defined as up to three cups per day) and frequent consumption (defined as three or more cups each day). Tea was further divided into green, black and herbal.

The study revealed that participants who drank coffee and herbal tea frequently (defined as three or more cups a day) had a significantly lower risk of developing liver stiffness, or fibrosis, compared with those who did not. These results were independent of a multitude of lifestyle factors (such as smoking history, alcohol consumption and physical activity) or BMI. Researchers also found that drinking coffee and tea had a beneficial effect on liver stiffness both in patients who had fatty liver disease and those who did not.

The findings may indicate that regular coffee and tea intake may help prevent liver fibrosis long before the signs of liver disease begin to appear. However, researchers said many more studies are needed to understand the mechanisms responsible for the association before doctors are able to make any serious recommendations.

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