

Harvard Nutrition Researcher to Coffee Fans: Go Ahead, Have 5 Cups a Day

According to this scientist, caffeine fans should feel free to ignore the naysayers.



BY JESSICA STILLMAN



You know you love coffee, but is this an unhealthy passion you should fight or a perfectly acceptable preference you should guiltlessly indulge? Ask the internet and

you'll just end up horribly confused. Half the headlines you come across will be like these genuinely terrifying examples from my Inc.com colleagues: Caffeine: The Silent Killer of Success or 19 Horrible Things That Can Happen if You Drink Too Much Caffeine. The other half will promise lovely reassuring fare such as 7 Surprising Reasons Why Coffee Is Really Good for You (also from here on Inc.com).

The obvious solution to this conundrum is to ask someone a little more reliable than the always entertaining but not always accurate internet. How about a Harvard nutrition researcher, for instance.

What does the latest science on coffee say?

Recently, Vasanti Malik, a research scientist in the Department of Nutrition at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, offered the general public the chance to quiz him on whatever topics they chose for a Reddit AMA (Ask Me

Anything). Among the many fascinating questions on nutrition was one query that will be of great interest to worried caffeine addicts everywhere.

"What's your take on coffee?" asked one participant from Utah, who says he is repeatedly told that drinking too much of his beloved brew is harming his stomach lining. Is there any truth to these tales, he wants to know?

The short answer, according to Malik, is no. Assuming you mostly skip the sweeteners, coffee is actually good for you. "Coffee, provided that it is minimally sweetened with sugar and not loaded with whipped cream can definitely be part of a healthy diet. Coffee whether it's caffeinated or decaf contains a number of healthful vitamins and nutrients and findings from our studies have shown associations with reduced risk for diabetes, cardiovascular disease and mortality," he responds.

But wait, that's not even the best part of the answer if you're truly coffee obsessed. What about dosage? How much coffee can you get away with drinking? "Benefits are seen up to about five cups per day, after that there does not appear to be any additional benefit," notes Malik, who offers [several links to research on the topic](#).

So basically, indulge away! Unless new science comes out to the contrary, you're in the clear. You can even [tell the coffee fear mongers](#) that you're cutting your chances of diabetes, heart disease and early death with every cup.

One small caveat

That being said, Malik does note that those Utahns fearful of coffee's effect on the stomach aren't totally misguided. If you suffer from serious digestive troubles, then staying away from coffee makes sense.

"Physicians usually suggest limiting intake of coffee among patients with ulcerative colitis, IBD (Inflammatory bowel disease)/IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome), or ulcers," he adds. Got one of those conditions? Then put down your mug. Everyone else, enjoy (up to five cups a day).

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PUBLISHED ON: APR 1, 2016