

Each month we provide information in Fact or Fiction on a nutrition topic. This month, we have information on coffee- is it good or bad?



Coffee seems to be one of those beverages that goes in and out of fashion as to if it is healthy or not. Coffee has been around for a long time and has been blamed for many ills, but it may actually have some health benefits. We also have many kinds of coffee including hot and cold brewed. Here are some recent studies and reports that may give some insight into if coffee is a good option for you or not.

Coffee is the #1 source of antioxidants in the United States! Regular and decaffeinated have nearly equal levels of antioxidants. It is a low-calorie beverage- about 2 cal per cup for black coffee, but calories can shoot up if cream, sugar or specialty drinks are consumed.

There are some health benefits reported for coffee drinkers. Coffee may:

- Protect against type 2 diabetes
- Decrease the risk of Parkinson's Disease and control tremors from the disease
- Lower risk of liver cancer and other diseases of the liver
- Improve cognitive function and decrease the risk of depression
- Protect against heart failure

There are also possible cons to coffee:

- Too much can make you anxious
- It can increase blood pressure in certain people
- Can negatively affect sleep
- May cause GI distress
- Unfiltered (boiled and espresso) coffee may cause a mild elevation in cholesterol

What about hot versus cold brewed coffee? A study in Scientific Reports helps to answer some of these questions. Cold-brew coffee has been marketed as being less acidic and higher in antioxidants, but research isn't supporting that. Researchers found chemical differences between hot- and cold-brew coffee that may have health impacts. It was found that hot-brew coffee has higher levels of antioxidants, which are believed to be responsible for some of the health benefits of coffee and also found that the pH levels of both hot and cold coffee were similar, ranging from 4.85 to 5.13 for all coffee samples tested

While the overall pH levels were similar, the researchers found that the hot-brew coffee method had more total titratable acids, which may be responsible for the hot cup's higher antioxidant levels. They said: "Coffee has a lot of antioxidants; if you drink it in moderation, research shows it can be pretty good for you. We found the hot brew has more antioxidant capacity." Since hot and cold brews have comparable pH levels, coffee drinkers shouldn't consider cold brew a "silver bullet" for avoiding gastrointestinal distress.

What about coffee and dehydration? Recent studies have found that caffeine isn't dehydrating after all. Your body is able to adjust to the caffeine if taken in moderation.

Bottom Line: Coffee may offer some health benefits when consumed in moderation.