



Good to the Last Drop

An ideal Saturday morning for many people may include waking up at a leisurely hour and then enjoying a fresh cup of coffee while flipping thru the weekend paper. Given a normal weekday morning, the opportunity to look at the paper may fly out the window, but that cup of coffee, or numerous cups of coffee for some, is essential. Forget even speaking to some people before they have had their first cup to get them going!

Research often goes back and forth as to what is good to eat and drink or what people should stay away from. Coffee is one of those beverages that has been thrown into the debate. Well, there appears to be good news for the coffee lovers out there. Research is now hinting that coffee may actually prove to be a beneficial beverage. The *Senior Journal* has posted several articles that attest to these findings.

The Archives of International Medicine (June 12, 2006) published a report suggesting that there is a lower risk for alcohol-related liver diseases, such as cirrhosis, for people who drink coffee. Drinking tea did not appear to have the same effect, suggesting that it is not necessarily the caffeine that contributes to the lower cirrhosis risk. The authors contend that coffee can possibly be seen as a protective measure against cirrhosis, although limiting heavy alcohol consumption is still the best preventive tool.

Another possible benefit for coffee drinkers published by the *American Journal of Nutrition* (Feb 2007) suggests that coffee offers protection against heart disease in the elderly population. Researchers found that people who consumed higher caffeinated drinks showed lower risk for coronary vascular disease than those who drank lower levels of caffeinated drinks. Caffeine is believed to enhance blood pressure which offers protection against heart disease in the elderly. Curiously, this positive effect was only found in people 65 and older.

The gift of a good memory may be a huge incentive for women to continue enjoying their daily cups of coffee. A study published in *Neurology* (Aug 7, 2007) found that when three or more cups of coffee were consumed by women in the 65+ age range, these women showed higher scores on memory tests than women who consumed only one cup or less of coffee or tea daily. When factors such as chronic illness, age, high blood pressure, education, cardiovascular disease, disability, and medication were accounted for, the findings were still supported. The reduction in cognitive decline in women is attributed to the caffeine, which is a psychostimulant, although researchers are still investigating why. The protection benefits appear to increase with age. At age 65+,

coffee drinkers were 30% less likely to have decline in memory and this rose to 70% for women over age 80.

Food and Technology magazine (Jan 2007) has reported several exciting findings supporting the claim that drinking coffee may actually be good for you! Coffee consumption apparently improves glucose regulation and decreases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, which is very encouraging news for seniors at risk for diabetes. Coffee is also suggested to possess cancer-protective properties, derived from the antioxidants found in coffee. Reduced risk of kidney stones, depression, Parkinson's disease, and Alzheimer's have been found thru the consumption of 3 to 5 cups of coffee a day, considered a moderate amount.

For the time being, coffee is looking good in the research world. Moderation with everything is the key to a healthy lifestyle, as it should be with coffee as well. So, hopefully those extra cups of coffee throughout the day won't seem like such a "guilty" pleasure after all!