

How Much Coffee Is OK?

By Len Canter

It seems as though every day brings a new study on the merits -- or the risks -- of coffee. So what's the real scoop?

If you like drinking coffee simply for the pleasure of it, Harvard University research has found that sipping up to six cups a day is probably safe. Remember: Those are 8-ounce cups with about 100 milligrams of caffeine and little added milk and sweetener. A cafe drink can pack the equivalent of three cups, plus the fat and calories from any add-ins, so tally it accordingly.

And it appears that coffee is not only "safe" to drink, it may also have actual health benefits, like protecting against diabetes, Parkinson's and certain liver diseases. Coffee drinkers may also have a slightly lower risk of dying from heart disease compared to those who skip the java.

How can a cup o' joe have such wide-ranging effects? Coffee is much more than caffeine, with hundreds of different compounds, any of which can lead to a positive health outcome.

While some studies have found an association between these benefits and drinking moderate amounts of coffee, even heavy coffee drinkers may benefit. A 2018 study published in *JAMA Internal Medicine* looked at 500,000 people who drank one to eight cups a day. Researchers found that heavy coffee drinking was associated with a lower risk of early death from all causes.

But keep in mind that it's important to personalize research findings to your own situation. For instance, if you feel jittery during the day or have trouble getting quality sleep, you may be drinking too much coffee. Also, if you're pregnant or have high blood pressure or diabetes, ask your doctor what's safe for you.

The bottom line: Expect more coffee research down the road, but for now, for those who like it, there's no need to think of coffee as an unhealthy habit anymore.