

Weekly Wellness: Should you drink coffee before exercise?

Posted: Oct 5, 2015 12:55 PM by **Amanda Barnes, KOMU 8 Wellness Coach**

Updated: Oct 5, 2015 2:07 PM

COLUMBIA - The smell of coffee being made is connected quite vividly to memories of being in my grandparents' house. They used a percolator – you know, the old metal ones with the orange light on the side. The smell of coffee, to this day, makes me think of my grandma's tiny kitchen in Skokie, Illinois. Back then, I didn't drink it (I was a small child), but the aroma has stayed with me as a loving and fond memory.

Today, as an adult, I love coffee. I still love the aroma but I also love the taste and the benefits. Over the years, coffee (and caffeine) has, at times, gotten a bad rap. Research has tied it to different myths... myths like:

- Caffeine is addictive (it's not).
- Caffeine causes insomnia (it doesn't).
- Caffeine increases risk of osteoporosis, heart disease and cancer (nope).
- Caffeine is harmful for women trying to get pregnant (nu-uh).
- Caffeine has a dehydrating effect (try again).

Actually, there are some amazing health benefits to drinking coffee. And [research to prove it!](#)

- **Type 2 Diabetes:** Researchers at UCLA identified that drinking coffee increases plasma levels of the protein responsible for controlling the activity between testosterone and estrogen which play a distinct role in the development of type 2 diabetes. Also, the Harvard School of Public Health researchers found that persons with type 2 diabetes who increased their coffee intake by more than one cup a day (on average, an increase of 1.69 cups per day) over a 4-year period had an 11% lower type 2 diabetes risk over the subsequent 4 years, compared with people who did not change their intake.
- **Parkinson's Disease:** Researchers carried out a study that assessed the link between coffee consumption and Parkinson's disease risk. The authors of the study concluded that "higher coffee and caffeine intake is associated with a significantly lower incidence of Parkinson's disease". Additionally, caffeine in coffee may help control movement in people suffering from Parkinson's, according to a study conducted at the Research Institute of the McGill University Health Centre.
- **Liver Cancer:** Italian researchers from Milan's Istituto di Ricerche Farmacologiche Mario Negri found that coffee consumption lowers the risk of liver cancer by about 40%. In addition, some of the results suggest that if you drink three cups a day, the risks are reduced by more than 50%.
- **Liver Disease:** Coffee consumption can lower the incidence of cirrhosis of the liver for alcohol drinkers by 22%, according to a study at the Kaiser Permanente Medical Care Program.
- **Heart Health:** Researchers at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard School of Public Health, concluded that drinking coffee in moderation protects against heart failure. They defined 'in moderation' as 2 European cups (equivalent to two 8-ounce American servings) per day. People who drank four 8-ounce cups on a daily basis had an 11% lower risk of heart failure, compared to those who did not.

So, now that you know [how great coffee can be](#) for your health, we need to delve a little deeper. If we're doing something healthy like drinking coffee and doing other healthy things like exercise: should we put the two together?

Should we drink coffee before our workout?

The Australian Institute of Sport Team did a study and found that caffeine triggers the muscles to start using fat as an energy source rather than carbohydrate sugars. Caffeine has been used by many endurance athletes as a way of getting extra energy out of their body's reserves during an event. A single cup of coffee may be enough to trigger these beneficial effects. There are more findings that caffeine is acceptable to ingest prior to training could be considered an ergogenic aid in training (which could be why caffeine is a banned substance on the International Olympic committee list).

A recent review published by the International Coffee Organization states that 150 grams of caffeine (about one cup of coffee) may be able to both reduce the sensation of fatigue as well as enhance exercise performance.

In many studies regarding caffeine and exercise, where performance was improved by the ingestion of caffeine or drinking coffee, there was also the additional benefit of an associated reduction in the sensation of fatigue. There were also a [number of studies](#) involved in the review that show the beneficial effects of drinking coffee and/or ingesting caffeine before high intensity exercise.

Of course, with all of this said, if you are concerned that you have a health condition that might make you more sensitive to caffeine, discuss with your physician before you begin increasing your intake.

I'll see you at the coffee shop!