



# Coffee and Life

By: Gary E. Foresman, MD

May 2012

In a recent New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM) article, many questions about coffee consumption and mortality were answered. As you know from [my article](#), the complex “herbal” preparation known as coffee has a potent blend of antioxidants and bioflavonoid anti-inflammatory compounds linked to a wide array of health benefits. Despite hundreds of articles linking coffee consumption with a lower risk of diabetes, Parkinson’s, liver disease, and heart disease (just to name a few), you still find people confused, thinking, “Isn’t coffee bad for you?” In a Puritanical country where nearly everyone is taught “if it feels good it must be bad for you,” I have refreshing news for you.

This study follows the NIH-AARP cohort of 229,119 men and 173,141 women (age 50- 71 years old) over a 14 year period looking at coffee consumption and cause- specific mortality. Although there are so many co-variants to consider, here are some simple conclusions. Compared to non-coffee drinkers, those who drink 4-5 cups of coffee per day have a 12% (men) and 16% (women) reduction in all-cause mortality. In some cases drinking greater than 6 cups of coffee per day (no limit) added to the benefits, but this was not consistent. Furthermore decaffeinated coffee, in most cases, provided similar benefits to caffeinated coffee.

Breaking it down a bit further, coffee had no effect on cancer mortality for men or women. However, the cause-specific mortality for *women* (at 4-5 cups per day vs. 0 cups per day) showed a reduction in death from heart disease of 22%, respiratory disease 35%, stroke 18%, injuries and accidents 36% (seems only to relate to caffeinated coffee), infectious disease 40%, diabetes 18%, and “other causes” 26%. In *men* the same numbers, still at 4-5 cups per day, include a reduction in death from heart disease of 13%, respiratory disease 17%, stroke 35%, injuries and accidents 28% (in guys this took greater than 6 cups per day of caffeinated coffee), infectious disease 30%, diabetes 20%, and “other causes” 29%.

Maybe that’s too many numbers for most of you, but undeniably what you see is an across-the-board reduction in mortality from every cause except cancer, in men and women, in decaffeinated and caffeinated coffee drinkers. As this is an observational study based on one questionnaire at the beginning of the trial, one can’t get to the proof of causality. We have thousands of other studies documenting the causative reasons; just no one has a trial covering 14 years with such profound reductions in mortality. Any and all multibillion dollar drugs do not provide this kind of benefit in treating any *one* of the conditions which coffee treats all of .

Never let common sense be over-ruled. If you don't drink coffee because you feel poorly when you do, don't drink coffee! But when people stop drinking coffee for "health reasons", they are dramatically worsening their risk of dying from the condition they think they are helping.

That just doesn't make sense.

Your Journey to Health and Healing,  
Gary E. Foresman, MD

Reference:

1. Association of Coffee Drinking with Total and Cause-Specific Mortality Neal D Freedman Ph.D., et al. NEJM 366:20 May 17, 2012. 1891-1904.

Website: [www.middlepathmedicine.com](http://www.middlepathmedicine.com)

E-mail: [info@middlepathmedicine.com](mailto:info@middlepathmedicine.com)