

# GUT INSTINCT

## DOES COFFEE HAVE HEALTH BENEFITS?

Melburnians love their coffee and one common question we get asked is regarding coffee and its associated health benefits and risks.

Coffee has been the subject of numerous medical studies, revealing largely positive health effects, particularly for the liver. Daily coffee drinkers are less likely to develop fatty liver disease and liver scarring compared to non-drinkers. Additionally, regular coffee consumption may reduce the likelihood of liver cancer.

It has been also been suggested that regular coffee consumption may be associated with a reduced risk of bowel cancer. The protective effect is thought to be moderate. Maintaining a healthy diet, screening tests and other lifestyle factors are still key strategies for reducing bowel cancer risk.

The health benefits of coffee are seen at 3-5 cups of coffee consumed per day. The coffee does not have to be caffeinated, and health benefits are also seen from decaf coffee.

Regular coffee consumption is generally safe for most people; however, caution is advised for pregnant women, as excessive caffeine may restrict fetal growth. Elderly women with osteoporosis should also be mindful, as high coffee intake has been linked to an increased risk of fractures. Additionally, if you experience reflux symptoms, it may be wise to limit your coffee intake, as caffeine can trigger issues like heartburn.



## THINGS TO CONSIDER IF YOU ARE TAKING A PPI



Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs) are widely prescribed to reduce the production of stomach acid. They are used to treat many conditions (e.g. gastro-oesophageal reflux disease and peptic ulcer disease) and they are effective at treating symptoms like heartburn and regurgitation.

Common PPIs include omeprazole (e.g. Losec), esomeprazole (e.g. Nexium), pantoprazole (e.g. Somac), lansoprazole (e.g. Zoton) & rabeprazole (e.g. Pariet). Whilst PPIs are well tolerated by the majority of people, there may be potential adverse effects, particularly with long term use. These potential adverse events include -

**Nutritional Deficiencies** - risk of decreased absorption of magnesium, calcium and vit B12 (0.5-2%)

**Bone Fractures** - increased risk of osteoporosis-related fractures (1.5 to 2-fold increase)

**Kidney Disease** - associated with an increased risk of chronic kidney disease. The degree of risk can vary based on individual factors, such as dosage and duration of use.

**Infections** - increased susceptibility to gastrointestinal infection (1-2%)

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There will be cases where long term use of PPIs are necessary to effectively manage certain conditions and prevent complications. If you are taking these medications regularly and are unsure of the reason, it's important to consult your doctor. They can help evaluate the need for continued use, discuss options for gradually reducing the dose and assess any potential side effects.

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## ARE YOU GETTING ENOUGH FIBRE IN YOUR DIET?

Fibre; the undigested matter found in vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, legumes, wholegrain breads and cereals, is incredibly good for our health. Fibre is demonstrated to be protective against heart disease, diabetes and cancer including bowel cancer. Fibre works to lower blood cholesterol levels, control blood sugar levels, regulate bowel habits, maintain bowel health and aid weight management.

Plant based foods contain **insoluble fibre** (adds bulk and helps push your bowel motion through the bowel) and **soluble fibre** (absorbs water, slows digestion and softens your bowel motion) in varying ratios. Resistant starch is a **prebiotic fibre** that feeds the good bacteria that reside in your colon. Resistant starch as the name suggests, resists digestion in the small intestines unlike starch, and passes to the large bowel or colon where fermentation by local bacteria produce protective short chain fatty acids. Resistant starches are a type of complex carbohydrate. Complex carbohydrates have a complex chemical structure that your body needs more energy to digest. They are generally healthier for you and more nutritious. These nutrients can be found in brown rice, beans, wholegrain bread and pasta, quinoa, cashews and potatoes.

The **Australian Dietary Guidelines** recommend that people 'eat a variety of grain foods, mostly whole grain and/or high cereal fibre varieties.' Unfortunately, most Australians do not consume enough fibre. The recommendations are women aim to consume 25g of fibre daily and men 30g daily.



### Ways in which we can easily increase our fibre intake -

- Aim for 30 plants per week
- Leave the skins on your fruit and vegetables when possible
- Eat the fruit or vegetables rather than drink the juice
- Choose wholegrain, wholemeal or brown, cereals, crackers, bread, pasta and rice
- Compare the fibre content of products by checking the nutrition information panel. Always compare per 100g rather than per serving and aim for at least 5g per 100g.
- Snack on fruit, vegetables, popcorn, hummus, grainy crackers
- Consider adding legumes, nuts and seeds to meals
- Add psyllium husks, bran or flaxseeds to cereal, muesli, yoghurt, smoothies
- Add nut or seed pastes on bread or crackers, or in salad dressing, marinades, stir fries.

Importantly, fibre requires fluid. Women should drink at least 2.1L per day and men 2.6L per day. Pregnant or breastfeeding women require 2.3 and 2.6 litres respectively. Gradually increase your fibre intake over days to weeks to prevent the wind and/or abdominal discomfort that can accompany dramatic changes in fibre intake.



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Thanks to Katherine Healy for contributing to this issue of Gut Instinct. Katherine is a dietitian and nutritionist that specialises in gastrointestinal diseases and disorders, and the founder of Medical Nutrition.