

Coffee drinkers don't gain alertness

Last Updated: Wednesday, June 2, 2010 | 6:15 PM ET [Comments 190](#)[Recommend 77](#)

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The kick in alertness from the first cup of morning coffee is just the removal of the fatiguing effects of caffeine withdrawal, scientists say.

The first cup of coffee for java lovers doesn't actually boost alertness, British researchers say following a study of 379 volunteers who were given caffeine or a placebo.

While regular consumption may feel beneficial in terms of alertness, that isn't actually the case, said study author Peter Rogers of the department of experimental psychology at the University of Bristol.

"That kick in alertness we get from our first coffee or tea in the morning is in fact just the removal of the fatiguing effects of caffeine withdrawal, which occurred from overnight abstinence," Rogers said.

The post-caffeine levels of alertness among frequent consumers were no higher than among non-consumers who received a placebo, the researchers found. The finding suggests caffeine only brings coffee drinkers back up their normal baseline level of alertness but no higher, the researchers said in Wednesday's issue of the journal *Neuropsychopharmacology*.

It's thought coffee makes people more alert by blocking a receptor in the brain involved in putting people to sleep, said study co-author Prof. David Nutt of Imperial College London.

Coffee culture

Despite the findings, Brian Scott of Toronto said he needs his three cups of coffee in the morning.

"If I don't start with coffee, I don't get fired up on all burners quick enough," Scott said.

In the study, caffeine did slightly increase levels of anxiety in the participants, who had to abstain from the stimulant for 16 hours before the experiment.

The researchers were expecting to find those with a genetic predisposition to the anxiety-provoking effects of caffeine would be deterred from drinking coffee. But some people with the genetic variant actually consumed larger amounts of coffee than those without the genetic variant, Nutt said.

That difference led the researchers to consider how the mild increase in anxiety might be part of the pleasant buzz caused by caffeine — that slight feeling of being on edge or "tense arousal," as Rogers called it.

Withdrawal effects

The pleasant perception of a buzz could also partly explain the appeal of coffee in society, where it brings people together at cafes, Rogers said.

Taste, aroma, the social aspect and the caffeine buzz all contribute to caffeine's popularity, said Sara Spector, owner of Everyday Gourmet, a coffee shop in Toronto's St. Lawrence Market.

But trying to kick the caffeine habit can bring classic withdrawal symptoms such as headaches and tiredness.

During the experiment, neither the participants nor the researchers knew who was consuming caffeine or a placebo.

But when the scientists analyzed the results, they found five participants who withdrew from the study complaining of such symptoms were actually in the placebo group. Instead of showing adverse effects of caffeine, these volunteers were showing adverse effects to caffeine withdrawal, Rogers said.

The slight anxiety effect is only found in consuming the amount of caffeine in coffee, not tea or soft drinks, the researchers noted.

The study was funded by the U.K.'s Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council. Several of the study authors have previously received consulting fees or grants from food manufacturers and pharmaceutical companies.

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[Atari Socialist](#) wrote: Posted 2010/06/02

at 6:59 PM ET "That kick in alertness we get from our first coffee or tea in the morning is in fact just the removal of the fatiguing effects of caffeine withdrawal, which occurred from overnight abstinence," Rogers

said.

That 'kick in alertness', is that the same as "Coffee Drinkers Don't Gain Alertness"?

I wonder how much they were paid to pull off this study?

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Scalestick wrote: Posted 2010/06/02

at 6:50 PM ET HealthTheNation wrote:

Posted 2010/06/02

at 5:07 PM ET

Coffee culture is for zombies, a product of clever marketing, movies, peer pressure, and ultimately - addiction.

=====

Coffee has been around since the 13th century ~ long before clever marketing, movies or peer pressure.

What isn't addictive in one way or another? It's a pretty short list.

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n0etic wrote: Posted 2010/06/02

at 6:43 PM ET I just read through the actual paper referenced here and find it extremely interesting that while they claim that caffeine does nothing to increase alertness, they didn't publish any of the numbers that they used to come to those conclusions and they didn't publish how they measured alertness.

They've made some pretty strong conclusions without showing their reasoning. They may be completely correct in their conclusion (I read a paper that found that coffee has no effect on how well you concentrate) but evidence should be presented along with conclusions.

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DaisyMae wrote: Posted 2010/06/02

at 6:42 PM ET HealthTheNation said: "Coffee culture is for zombies, a product of clever marketing, movies, peer pressure, and ultimately - addiction."

Tell that to 50 million Italians.

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[andy cynic](#) wrote: Posted 2010/06/02

at 6:39 PM ET Nonsense! I can't do without 3 mugs of coffee ni the morning< and it is not instant coffee.

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