Coffee, Even Decaf, May Promote Liver Health

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Drinking coffee, whether decaffeinated or regular, is linked to healthier levels on tests indicating liver function, the Huffington Post reports. Publishing their findings in the journal Hepatology, researchers drew data on nearly 28,000 adults who provided information on coffee consumption in a 24-hour period to the U.S. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey between 1999 and 2010.

“Prior research found that drinking coffee may have a possible protective effect on the liver,” Qian Xiao, PhD, MPH, of the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Maryland, and the study’s lead author, said in a release. “However, the evidence is not clear if that benefit may extend to decaffeinated coffee.”

The researchers found that, when compared with the participants who drank no coffee, those who reported drinking three or more cups each day had lower levels of various liver enzymes, including alanine aminotransferase (ALT), aspartate aminotransferase (AST), alkaline phosphatase (ALP) and gamma glutamyl transaminase (GGT). Elevated levels of these enzymes indicate liver dysfunction. The levels were also low for those who drank decaf.

“Our findings link total and decaffeinated coffee intake to lower liver enzyme levels,” Xiao said. “These data suggest that ingredients in coffee, other than caffeine, may promote liver health. Further studies are needed to identify these components.”

To read the Huffington Post story, click here.

To read the study abstract, click here.

To read the press release, click here.

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