

## **Drinking Decaf Coffee May be Good for the Liver**

*Source: Institute of Food Technologists*

A study published in *Hepatology* shows that higher coffee consumption, regardless of caffeine content, was linked to lower levels of abnormal liver enzymes. Coffee consumption is highly prevalent with more than half of all Americans over 18 drinking on average three cups each day, according to a 2010 report from the National Coffee Association. Moreover, the International Coffee Association reports that coffee consumption has increased 1% each year since the 1980s, increasing to 2% in recent years.

“Prior research found that drinking coffee may have a possible protective effect on the liver. However, the evidence is not clear if that benefit may extend to decaffeinated coffee,” said lead researcher Qian Xiao from the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Maryland.

For the present study researchers used data from the U.S. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES, 1999–2010). The study population included 27,793 participants, ages 20+, who provided coffee intake in a 24-hr period. The team measured blood levels of several markers of liver function, including aminotransferase (ALT), aminotransferase (AST), alkaline phosphatase (ALP), and gamma glutamyl transaminase (GGT) to determine liver health.

The researchers found that participants who reported drinking three or more cups of coffee per day had lower levels of ALT, AST, ALP, and GGT compared to those not consuming any coffee. Researchers also found low levels of these liver enzymes in participants drinking only decaffeinated coffee.

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