

Coffee Consumption Cuts Risk for Heart Arrhythmia, AFib, Study finds

By: Brian P. Dunleavy, UPI



Caffeine's effects on the heart are unclear and may be outweighed by its health benefits, including antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects that may lower a person's risk for cancer, diabetes and Parkinson's disease, researchers said. Photo by Engin_Akyurt/Pixabay

A study published Monday disputes the common notion that drinking caffeine increases risk for heart ailments, including atrial fibrillation. In fact, the risk declines by 3% to 4% for each cup of coffee consumed.

Researchers, whose study was published in JAMA Internal Medicine, say the common advice to avoid caffeine related to arrhythmia and AFib is based on a few studies using a small number of individuals.

"Given other potential health benefits of coffee, and the importance of simply enjoying a cup of coffee, broad-based prohibitions against coffee to reduce the risk of arrhythmias are likely unwarranted," study co-author Dr. Gregory M. Marcus, associate chief of cardiology at the University of California, told UPI in an email.

Caffeine is a central nervous system stimulant, meaning its consumption can heighten awareness in the brain, causing increasing feelings of alertness, according to the National Institutes of Health.

However, caffeine's effects on the heart are unclear and may be outweighed by its health benefits, including antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects that may lower a person's risk for cancer, diabetes and Parkinson's disease, Marcus and his colleagues said.

For this study, the researchers analyzed data on more than 386,000 adults over a roughly five-year period.

About 60% of the study participants were regular coffee drinkers, and they consumed about two cups per day, on average.

Just over 4% of the study participants developed an arrhythmia during the study period, the data showed.

However, coffee drinkers were slightly less likely to develop an arrhythmia or AFib, even if they consumed two or more cups per day, the researchers said.

In addition, the prevalence of high blood pressure, heart disease, heart failure and other cardiovascular-related problems was similar among non-coffee drinkers and those who consumed two or fewer and two or more cups per day, according to the researchers.

"[Although] I would not recommend someone initiate coffee consumption with the intention of reducing their risk of arrhythmias, [I] would not automatically suggest avoiding or reducing their coffee consumption to avoid arrhythmia risks," Marcus said.

"Adhering to the 'all things in moderation' adage is probably reasonable, meaning one or two cups of coffee a day for most," he said.