

Coffee Caveats

Mounting research suggests coffee may offer protection against a number of health concerns, including cancer, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and Parkinson's. It also has athletic performance-enhancing benefits

Green tea has also been shown to improve heart, bone and vision health, and may protect against type 2 diabetes and cancer. Long-term consumption may also promote weight loss

Quality is paramount for both coffee and tea. The healthiest coffee is organic dark roast, ground from fresh whole coffee beans, consumed "black." Also look for organic tea grown in a pristine environment

Be careful, though, as most all coffee produced is heavily contaminated with pesticides. It's actually one of the most heavily sprayed crops. So, when we speak about the benefits of coffee, let it be understood that we're talking about organic (ideally fair trade), pesticide-free coffee.

Another "con" is that most coffee available today is rancid, packed from ground beans that cannot survive even a week before getting stale. This is because the rate of rancidity increases dramatically once you grind the beans. Hence, much of the bagged coffee you find in your grocery store are already degraded.

All that will give you is the caffeine. It won't provide you with healthy nutritional co-factors. So another basic principle in using coffee for its health benefits is to grind your own coffee beans.

Thirdly, you'll want to make sure it's roasted correctly. It's often the case that foods with the darkest pigments offer the most robust benefits to health, and dark roast coffee, such as French Roast, espresso or Turkish coffee, may be no exception.

One 2011 study⁴ found that dark roast coffee led to a significant body weight reduction in pre-obese volunteers, whereas light roast did not. Dark roast coffee also produces more of a chemical that helps prevent the production of excess stomach acid, so it may be easier on your stomach.⁵

Overall, the healthiest form of coffee is organic, freshly ground, and served black, meaning without milk or sugar. Adding dairy may interfere with your body's absorption of

beneficial chlorogenic acids, while the added sugar will contribute to insulin resistance, which is at the heart of most chronic disease.

Lastly, if you use a "drip" coffee maker, be sure to use non-bleached filters. The bright white ones are chlorine-bleached, and some of this chlorine will leach from the filter during the brewing process. Bleached filters may also contain dangerous disinfection byproducts, such as dioxin.