Coffee Boosts Survival for Metastatic Colorectal Cancer Patients

A cup of coffee a day is linked to longer life and delayed cancer progression.

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Coffee's reputation is on the upswing these days. While not all studies agree, growing evidence suggests that a daily coffee habit not only doesn't increase one's cancer risk but may actually reduce the risk of developing cancers of the liver, mouth, colon and rectum.

Now, a new study published in the journal JAMA Oncology adds a new twist—a coffee habit may be beneficial for some people who already have cancer. Daily consumption of coffee was associated with improved survival in patients with metastatic colorectal cancer, reports The Harvard Gazette.

Among 1,171 patients treated for this cancer, those in the habit of drinking two to three cups of coffee daily were more likely to live longer and have delayed cancer progression compared with those who didn't drink coffee. Furthermore, drinking more than four cups a day was associated with even greater benefits, and both caffeinated and decaffeinated coffee were associated with benefits.

Coffee has antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties that may work against cancer, explained coauthor Chen Yuan, of the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

While an observational study such as this one can't establish a cause-and-effect relationship between coffee consumption and the health outcomes of those with colorectal cancer, these findings point to a statistically significant association. However, this isn't enough for experts to start recommending that those with advanced or metastatic colorectal cancer begin drinking coffee every day or increase their intake.

"Although it is premature to recommend a high intake of coffee as a potential treatment for colorectal cancer, our study suggests that drinking coffee is not harmful and may potentially be beneficial," said senior author Kimmie Ng, MD, MPH, of Dana-Farber.

Ng also noted that further investigation is needed to determine whether there is a causal relationship between coffee consumption and better health outcomes in those with colorectal cancer and which compounds in coffee might be responsible for any benefits seen.

For related coverage, read “Iced Coffee, Please! WHO Study Warns Hot Drinks May Cause Cancer.”

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