

STATEMENT

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NCA Statement on Dietary Guidelines for Americans

The 2015 U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans mentions coffee for the first time, acknowledging that moderate coffee consumption “can be incorporated into healthy eating patterns.” At the same time, however, the Dietary Guidelines fail to acknowledge the potential benefits associated with coffee consumption – benefits recognized by the U.S. Government-appointed scientists of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC) and recommended for inclusion as part of the 2015 U.S. Dietary Guidelines.

Research has found “consistent evidence” that coffee is associated with a reduced risk of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease, and “moderate evidence” of a protective association between caffeine and risk of Parkinson’s disease.

The NCA strongly endorses the scientific recommendations of the DGAC – which remain intact in the committee’s final report – and the place they should hold in the spirit, if not letter, of the Dietary Guidelines and in the minds of the millions of Americans who look to the Guidelines for advice on a healthy diet.

The DGAC’s recommendations spotlight some of the literature’s strongest associations, although there are many others. Numerous studies spanning a dozen years have consistently linked coffee with a reduced risk of developing type 2 diabetes. One recent mega-study,¹ capturing results from 30 independent studies and 1.2 million people, found a risk reduction of 12% for every two cups per day up to a one-third reduction at six cups. Coffee’s association with liver health is as broad as it is deep. Studies have linked coffee with significant protective properties against cirrhosis,² cancer,³ and other liver ailments, including among those with risk factors such as alcohol abuse, fatty liver disease and hepatitis. Study results include a 40% risk reduction for cirrhosis² and a 50% risk reduction for liver cancer³. Two recent studies^{4,5} also concluded that long-term coffee consumption could reduce the risk of developing Parkinson’s disease, as well as other neurodegenerative conditions.

Researchers have found other protective associations with brain health as well. One study⁶ concluded that men who drink coffee had a fourfold lower incidence of cognitive decline. Another study⁴ linked coffee consumption with a reduction in the beta-amyloid plaques suspected of causing Alzheimer’s disease. Another review study⁷ reported that coffee and caffeine enhance short-term memory and cognition and that there is limited research suggesting that long-term use may protect against cognitive decline or dementia. Among several large studies associating coffee consumption overall longevity, consumption of three to five cups per day, the levels recommended by the DGAC, led to a peak of 13% reduction in mortality risk, 19% among women and 10% among men,⁸ while another study⁹ cited a 3% added risk reduction for each additional cup of coffee per day.

As the DGAC itself concluded, “moderate coffee consumption can be incorporated into a healthy dietary pattern.”

Footnotes

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- 2 A. Tverdal, S. Skurtveit, *Annals of Epidemiology*, 2003:13(6)
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- 4 G. Arendash, T. Mori, Cl Cao, M. Mamcarz et al, *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*, 2009:17(3)
- 5 C. Cao, J. Cirrito. X. Lin, L Wang et al, *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*, 2009:17(3)
- 6 B. M. van Gelder, B. Buijsse, M. Tijhuis et al, *Europoean Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 2007:61(2)
- 7 A.J. Carman, P.A. Dacks, R. F. Lane et al, *The Journal of Nutrition, Health and Aging*, 2014:18(4)
- 8 Y. Zhao, K. Wu, J. Zheng et al, *Public Health Nutrition*, 2014:18(7)
- 9 S. Malerba, F. Turati, C. Galeone et al, *European Journal of Epidemiology*, 2013:28(5)