

Coffee good for the heart, research finds

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TWO to three cups of coffee a day is the “magic number” for a healthy heart, according to a new study led by Australian arrhythmia expert Dr Peter Kistler, who is a professor of medicine at the University of Melbourne and Monash University.

The benefits of drinking this amount of coffee each day apply to people with and without cardiovascular disease, he tells Jim Mora.

People with heart conditions are often warned against drinking coffee by medical professionals, Dr Kistler says.

His study — which tracked over 400,000 people from the UK over 10 years — was conducted mainly to find out whether it was safe for them to continue.

We now know that it’s actually beneficial, he says.

“What we found is those with underlying heart disease had a survival benefit if they continued to drink coffee.”

The researchers found that, generally, our hearts benefit from drinking one to five cups of coffee per day. Two to three cups per day delivers the most consistent benefits and the good effects level off at five or more cups per day, Dr Kistler says.

So how does coffee benefit our heart health?

Coffee beans contain up to 100 biologically active components, some of which have antiinflammatory and antioxidant effects, he says.

Coffee does increase heart rate and some people swear that drinking it sets off their arrhythmia but caffeine generally doesn’t trigger “true arrhythmias” and can actually have an anti-arrhythmic effect on the heart, Dr Kistler says.

“There’s no evidence that people who enjoy drinking coffee should stop drinking coffee because they’re worried about the effects on their health.”

Too much coffee makes many people anxious and jittery and beyond five cups a day could be dangerous but coffee consumption is really to the individual, he says.