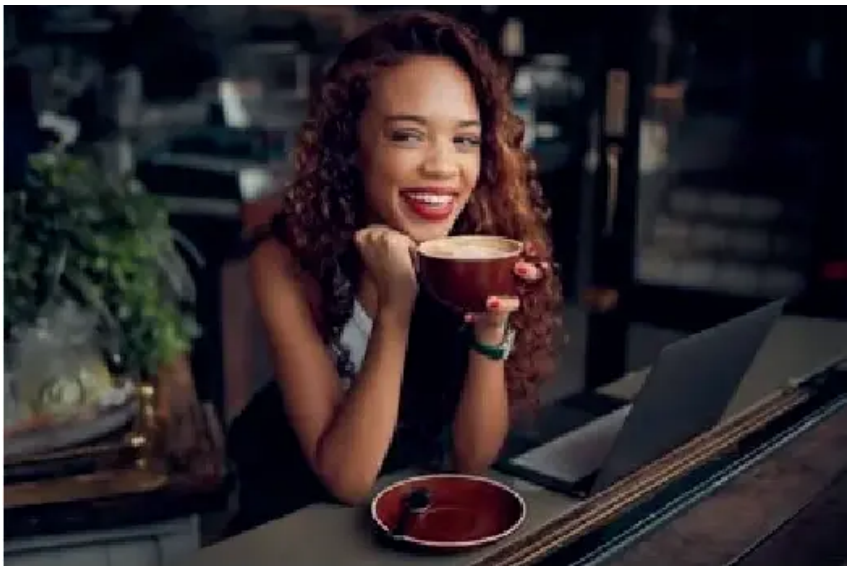
Is coffee really good for you?

Eswatini Daily News · 13 Jun 2025 · 17

COFFEE is personal. It's a drug. A ritual. It's healthy.



Or is it? For decades, studies have linked drinking coffee to a longer life and reduced risk of an array of health problems.

This week, a big study grabbed headlines linking coffee to healthy aging – women who drank caffeinated coffee were less likely to develop physical problems, cognitive impairment, and chronic diseases as they aged. In January, another study found that morning coffee drinkers lived longer than people who drank coffee later in the day. Another recent analysis suggested those longevity benefits may be limited to those whose coffee doesn't contain a lot of added sugar or saturated fat.

Sorry, mocha and Frappuccino Maybe wait for the next study.

"Coffee is like the science version of a celebrity – it makes headlines no matter what," said Susan Albers, PsyD, a clinical psychologist at the Cleveland Clinic. "I think that's because it crosses age, culture, and socioeconomic status. It's a substance that everyone enjoys and drinks. And it's one of the most widely consumed psychoactive substances on the planet. We forget that it is actually a drug that is paired with an enjoyable drink."

Three out of four adults in the U.S. report they are coffee drinkers. Half of Americans drink it daily. That's a huge number available to researchers, who can then examine countless variables and look for associations. If we're all doing something and it turns out to be bad for us – or good – public health officials want to let us know.

Coffee is loaded with micronutrients, such as polyphenols that have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory benefits, and most coffee also contains the drug caffeine.

"It's such a window into the brain and how what we put in our bodies impacts us on every different level, in positive and negative ways," Albers said of our own and researchers' seemingly insatiable thirst for more info on coffee.

So will there ever be a verdict? We've been let down before. First it was red wine, touted as healthy until recently, when all alcohol has been frowned upon. And like coffee, chocolate seems to forever be switching sides between healthy and unhealthy.

What Is It About Coffee Stories That We Just Can't Resist?

"We want to have healthy habits. We want to keep this enjoyable ritual in our lives but make sure that we're not sabotaging our health," Albers said. "And so, the more information that we obtain about it, the better. What I think happens is that there might be a little bit of a click bias."

The Truth About Coffee

fans.

Let's get down to the facts, is coffee good or bad for you?

Coffee lovers click to hear scientific confirmation that their habit is healthy, and people who don't like coffee click in hopes of confirming their choice to avoid the drink.

Be skeptical of health claims about coffee, especially on social media, advised Jamie Mok, a registered dietitian nutritionist based in Los Angeles, California, and spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Unqualified health influencers are everywhere these days, so look for someone with credentials who cites evidence from scientific journals. Extreme or ultra-simple claims made in absolute terms are a sign to keep scrolling.

Is There a Consensus About the Health Benefits of Coffee?

Yes. But the benefits may not apply to everyone.

"Large observational studies are generally showing a consistent positive association between moderate coffee consumption – so like two to three, maybe four cups a day – and the reduced risk of several diseases, including cardiovascular disease, liver disease, or cancer," Mok said.

Some people may not get all those benefits, she said – like those who already eat a diet rich in polyphenols (you're a blueberry lover, for example), or who aren't drinking black coffee, since that's what is usually studied.

And even if you do just have a couple of cups of straight black and only in the morning, it may not be healthy if you have a condition like irritable bowel syndrome or anxiety.

Do Your Own Coffee Study

"Coffee really is a gold mine for neuroscientists and psychologists who want to study the brain," Albers said. "It gives them this wealth of information about how what we put in our body impacts us. And as a psychologist, that's incredibly exciting and interesting to see how something like caffeine impacts our sleep and our mood."

Healthiest Coffees

Both Albers and Mok said that when they are working with clients who have anxiety or sleep problems, caffeine is one of the first places they examine. Most people don't realize the deep impact it can have on other parts of their health, they said.

Albers suggested a "mindfulness drinking" exercise to examine your relationship with coffee that she often shares with clients:

Sit down to drink your coffee (riding in the car or on the subway doesn't count).

Breathe deeply to smell the aroma, maybe wrap your hands around the cup to feel its warmth, and use the moment to slow down and be present. This can be quick, but run through your senses of taste, touch, smell, sight, even hearing.

Before you start drinking, rate your energy level and mood each from 1 to 10.

For the next hour, keep track of how you feel, and at the end of the hour do the 1-to10 rating again for your energy level and mood.

"For many people, after they drink their cup of coffee, their mood boosts significantly," said Albers, who has authored best-selling self-help books including Eating Mindfully. Repeat the experiment on other days, perhaps taking your coffee black or adding a flavor and see if the results change.

You may find that coffee affects your energy or sleep, or it enhances your relationships by adding ritual to a shared coffee date. Maybe coffee helps boost your mood and the steaming cup and familiar taste simply bring you pleasure.

"There isn't anything to feel bad about with that," Albers said.