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The Health Reformer

Caffeine is not a stress reliever...the opposite is true

Many people think "of caffeine as a stress reliever, but a new study suggests the opposite is true. Researchers at Duke University Medical Center found that caffeine actually exaggerates stress and its effect lasts throughout the day.

Even more troubling, the researchers concluded that the equivalent of four cups of coffee raises blood pressure for many hours. Although the increases appear modest, they are large enough to affect heart attack and stroke risk, says lead author James D. Lane, PhD. The findings were reported in the July/August issue of the journal *Psychosomatic Medicine*.

'The level of blood pressure change we saw has been associated with an increased risk of heart disease,' Lane tells WebMD. 'People consuming typical amounts of coffee and caffeinated soft drinks are probably raising their blood pressure by an amount equal to the beneficial reduction seen with antihypertensive drugs. So if you are taking blood pressure medication, it may not be doing you any good if you are drinking three or four cups of coffee a day.'

Caffeine is consumed daily by an estimated 85% of adults in the U.S. in the form of coffee, tea, and sodas. The average daily number of cups per coffee drinker is 3.3, and 64% of all coffee is consumed at breakfast.

To determine the impact of caffeine consumption during the morning and early afternoon, Lane and colleagues recruited 47 daily coffee drinkers for a two-day study. Half of the subjects were given caffeine capsules on the first day and the other half were given placebo pills. On the second study day, the two groups were switched; the previous day's placebo group got the caffeine and the caffeine group got the placebo.

The total caffeine given equaled that found in four cups of coffee, and the capsules were consumed in the morning and at lunchtime. Blood pressure and heart rate were measured repeatedly on both days using a portable monitor, and stress hormone levels were monitored through urine samples.

When caffeine and placebo days were compared, the researchers found blood pressure to be consistently higher on the caffeine days -- an average of 4 millimeters (mm) higher for systolic pressure and 3 mm for diastolic. Stress hormone levels also rose by an average of 32% on the caffeine days, and both the blood pressure and adrenaline increase lasted throughout the day and into the evening.

'The message for the average coffee drinker is that if they are worried about blood pressure or if they feel highly stressed, they might want to consider cutting back on or eliminating caffeine,' Lane says. 'It is a simple thing to do, and they might feel a whole lot better.' "

By Salynn Boyles, WebMD Medical News

Important note on tea and coffee:

"Tea acts as a stimulants and, to a certain extent, produces

intoxication. The action of coffee and many other popular drinks is similar. The first effect is exhilarating. The nerves of the stomach are excited; these convey irritation to the brain, and this in turn is aroused to impart increased action to the heart and short-lived energy to the entire system. Fatigue is forgotten; the strength seems to be increased. The intellect is aroused, the imagination becomes more vivid.

Because of these results, many suppose that their tea or coffee is doing them great good. But this is a mistake. Tea and coffee do not nourish the system. Their effect is produced before there has been time for digestion and assimilation, and what seems to be strength is only nervous excitement. When the influence of the stimulant is gone, the unnatural force abates, and the result is a corresponding degree of languor and debility.

The continued use of these nerve irritants is followed by headache, wakefulness, palpitation of the heart, indigestion, trembling, and many other evils; for they wear away the life forces. Tired nerves need rest and quiet instead of stimulation and overwork. Nature needs time to recuperate her exhausted energies. When her forces are goaded on by the use of stimulants, more will be accomplished for a time; but, as the system becomes debilitated by their constant use, it gradually becomes more difficult to rouse the energies to the desired point. The demand for stimulants becomes more difficult to control, until the will is overborne and there seems to be no power to deny the unnatural craving. Stronger and still stronger stimulants are called for, until exhausted nature can no longer respond.

....In relation to tea, coffee, tobacco, and alcoholic drinks, the only safe course is to touch not, taste not, handle not. The tendency of tea, coffee, and similar drinks is in the same direction as that of alcoholic liquor and tobacco, and in some cases the habit is as difficult to break as it is for the drunkard to give up intoxicants. Those who attempt to leave off these stimulants will for a time feel a loss and will suffer without them. But by persistence they will overcome the craving and cease to feel the lack. Nature may require a little time to recover from the abuse she has suffered; but give her a chance, and she will again rally and perform her work nobly and well." *The Ministry of Healing, pp.326, 335*

IMPORTANT: Energy drinks like Red Bull have as much caffeine as a cup of coffee.

NOTE: Cereal beverages such as Postum, Pero, and Roma have a coffee-like taste and can take the place of regular coffee. These products contain no caffeine at all and no caffeineol (a stomach irritant) which even decaf coffee still contains.

Alcohol is leading 'date-rape' drug

Alcohol is by far the leading 'date rape' drug with a

(Over, please)

cocktail responsible for more sexual abuse of young women than a tiny vial of GHB, the latest weapon in the date-raper's arsenal, experts here said.

At a world forum on drugs and addiction, experts stressed that alcohol is the primary substance that facilitates sexual aggression, not gamma hydrobutyrate (GHB), which men have been increasingly and surreptitiously dropping into the drinks of women to lower sexual inhibitions.

"For several years, we have been trumpeting that GHB is a rapist drug, while in fact only a tiny minority of abused women have fallen prey to it," said Carole Peclet, a chemist at Montreal's Forensic Laboratory and Legal Medicine.

Studies in recent years in the United States, Canada, Britain and Australia have all found that alcohol is found more often in rape victims than marijuana, pharmaceuticals or cocaine, Peclet said.

Sify News, AFP 2000 (news.sify.com)

"Under the influence of the drink they take, they are led to do things from which, if they had not tasted the maddening drug, they would have shrunk in horror." *Temperance, p. 24*

Many Hospitals Offer Fast Food

"Public health experts have declared that there is an epidemic of obesity in this country, and they relate that to the Western diet and our reliance on high-fat, convenience foods," says University of Michigan researcher Peter Cram, MD. "For hospitals to say they promote healthy lifestyles and then offer these fast foods because it is convenient and potentially profitable is a mixed message."

Cram and colleagues surveyed 16 of the nation's top hospitals, and found that just over a third of them had at least one fast food franchise on the premises. In a research letter, published June 12 in *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, they wrote that while fast food restaurants, "are not solely responsible for the rising incidence of obesity, their ubiquitous presence undoubtedly contributes to the proliferation of high-fat and high-calorie diets among Americans."

"Twenty years ago people smoked in hospitals, and there was contentious debate about whether or not this was appropriate," Cram tells WebMD. "This issue has some of the same elements. If obesity is a problem, and it is related to fast food, is it appropriate for hospitals to be serving it? I think there is a strong argument that the answer is 'no.'"

University of Michigan pediatrics professor Howard Markel, MD, PhD, agrees. Markel was not involved in the research, but recently published a piece in *The New York Times* questioning the growing trend of allowing fast-food franchises in both hospitals and schools.

He tells WebMD that, with the exception of smoking, obesity is the biggest health risk facing this nation. He acknowledges that banning fast foods from hospitals is a more complicated social issue than banning smoking. But he adds that it is a message that should be sent, because high-fat meals like those typically ordered in fast-food restaurants are a big part of the problem.

"I like a good grilled cheese sandwich with onion rings as much as the next person, but the reality is that we shouldn't be eating that way," he says. "And we need to be setting that example in hospitals."

By Salynn Boyles, WebMD Medical News

It's not just about the harm drinkers are causing themselves

Motivating non-drinkers on college campuses to speak out against the harm caused by binge drinking could be an important step towards cutting the rate of alcohol-related problems, according to Boston University School of Public Health researcher Ralph Hingson, Sc.D.

...In fact, Hingson's report is dedicated to the memory of Jonathan Levy, 20, a Radford College student who was killed in an alcohol-related car crash in October 1997. Levy was driving to a party with a student who had been drinking; the driver lost control of the car and collided head-on with another vehicle. The driver and Levy -- neither of whom was wearing a seat-belt -- were killed, and a rear-seat passenger lost an eye in the crash.

Also killed was a Radford professor, the driver of the other vehicle.

"This tells us that people in all segments of the campus can be affected, and that many are affected other than drinking student," Hingson said.

While students overdosing on alcohol and drunk party-goers falling out of dorm buildings get the most attention, Hingson points out that alcohol-related car crashes are the biggest killer of college age students. Further, since unintentional injuries are the leading cause of death among people ages 1 to 34, and 38 percent of all unintentional-injury deaths involve alcohol, drinking is "the leading contributor to the leading cause of death of young people in the U.S.," said Hingson.

...."What we've been calling for is a comprehensive partnership between campuses and the community to address this issue," Hingson said. Coalition members should include school officials, educators, students, local government, police, and merchants -- including alcohol retailers -- Hingson said. "We particularly need students involved," he said. "The majority of students want tighter regulation around alcohol. We need to give that group a voice."

By Bob Curley, Join Together Online

Please read this about alcohol's secondhand effects:

"It is not the drunkard and his family alone who are imperiled by the work of the liquor seller, nor is the burden of taxation the chief evil which his traffic brings on the community. We are all woven together in the web of humanity. The evil that befalls any part of the great human brotherhood brings peril to all.

Many a man who through love of gain or ease would have nothing to do with restricting the liquor traffic has found, too late, that the traffic had to do with him. He has seen his own children besotted and ruined. Lawlessness runs riot. Property is in danger. Life is unsafe. Accidents by sea and by land multiply. Diseases that breed in the haunts of filth and wretchedness make their way to lordly and luxurious homes. Vices fostered by the children of debauchery and crime infect the sons and daughters of refined and cultured households.

There is no man whose interests the liquor traffic does not imperil. There is no man who for his own safeguard should not set himself to destroy it." *The Ministry of Healing, p. 345*

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