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Coffee and Your Heart

For most adults with otherwise stable hearts, coffee in moderation looks neutral or mildly protective.

2 to 3
cups a day, around where heart risk is lowest in the studies

10 to 15%
roughly lower risk of heart disease with up to about three cups a day

400 mg
caffeine a day, roughly the upper limit for healthy adults

WHAT THE EVIDENCE SHOWS

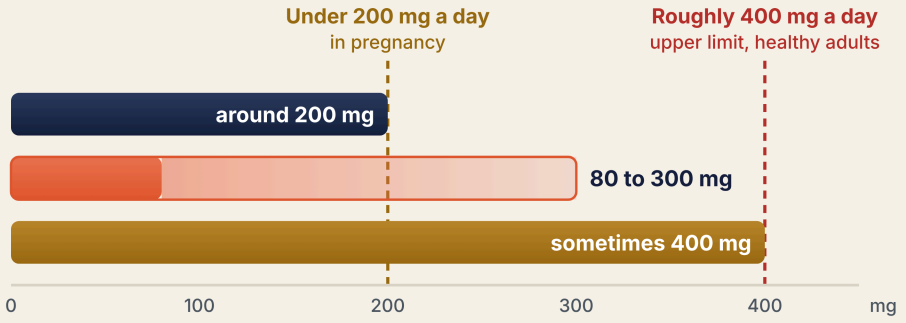
A couple of cups is usually fine, even with AFib

In large studies that follow hundreds of thousands of people for decades, two to three cups of regular coffee a day is linked with the same or slightly lower risk of heart attack, stroke and dying from heart disease, compared with no coffee. Beyond five or six cups the protective signal flattens and, in some groups, reverses. Many people with AFib are told to stop coffee. In a 2023 trial, coffee drinkers wore heart monitors and had coffee or avoided it on alternating days. Its main measure, extra beats from the upper chambers, showed no clear difference. Extra beats from the lower chambers rose on coffee days, felt as flutters or skips. Population studies find similar or slightly lower rates of new AFib in moderate coffee drinkers. Routine caffeine restriction in AFib is no longer recommended unless you can clearly link your episodes to caffeine, and people who can should listen to their bodies.

THE 400 MILLIGRAM CONVERSATION

How fast the milligrams add up

Caffeine per serving
milligrams, as the full article gives them



The 400 milligram limit works out to about four 8-ounce cups of brewed coffee, or two 12-ounce cups from a coffee shop. Energy drinks and pre-workout powders complicate the math. Three coffees and a pre-workout may put you well past 800 milligrams a day. A racing heart at rest, jitteriness, poor sleep and a humming feeling in your chest are a signal that you are past your personal limit.

Keep your morning cup

For most people, a couple of morning cups is unlikely to be what hurts you. The better question is whether your caffeine pattern fits your sleep, your blood pressure and your heart rhythm.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS AND WHEN TO GET CHECKED ARE ON THE BACK

FITTING COFFEE TO YOUR HEART

Special situations, and when to get checked

GET CHECKED

these shouldn't wait for a routine visit

Call 911	Fainting, especially during exercise, or chest pain. Caffeine may be the trigger, and it does not explain the symptom away.
AFib, sudden racing	With known AFib, sudden, persistent racing of the heart, especially with chest pain, fainting or trouble breathing, is an emergency. Coffee almost never causes this. Your AFib does.
Chest pain that comes and goes	Chest pain or pressure that you can bring on with coffee or any activity needs evaluation.
New or different symptoms	New shortness of breath, or sudden palpitations unlike anything before. Palpitations that last, or come with lightheadedness or near-fainting, also need a look.
Readings above 160	A top number above 160 on multiple days. See your doctor whatever your coffee intake.

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

High blood pressure	A strong cup can raise blood pressure several points for a couple of hours, but regular drinkers build up tolerance. Take home readings before your first cup. If you drink five or six cups a day and your pressure is hard to control, cutting back is reasonable.
Extra beats	Caffeine can make extra beats (PVCs or PACs) more frequent in sensitive people. If a monitor shows a lot of these beats, a couple of weeks off caffeine is reasonable. If the beats drop a lot, you have your answer. If they don't change, coffee isn't the cause.
Heart failure or heart attack	Moderate coffee appears safe in stable heart failure. In the first weeks after a heart attack or a new heart failure diagnosis, hold your usual amount steady. Don't increase it, and don't stop suddenly.
Pregnancy	Most obstetric guidelines suggest under 200 milligrams a day, roughly one to two cups of brewed coffee. Talk to your OB if you're pregnant or trying to conceive.

SMALL CHANGES THAT HELP

Decaf	Keeps most of the polyphenols and antioxidants, and studies find a similar drop in heart risk. You lose the alertness kick, which often helps sleep and anxiety.
A paper filter	French press, espresso and boiled coffee carry compounds that can raise LDL cholesterol modestly. Paper-filtered drip coffee removes most of them.
Timing and add-ins	Avoid caffeine within about eight hours of bedtime. A 3 p.m. coffee still has half its caffeine working at 9 p.m. Black coffee has about five calories, and a specialty drink can run 500 calories.

BRING TO YOUR VISIT

Your usual cup count, your home blood pressure log and any palpitation patterns you've noticed. Coffee doesn't interact meaningfully with common blood thinners, including warfarin.

READ THE FULL ARTICLE

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coffee-and-heart-health

For education only, and not a substitute for advice from your own physician. Sources include the CRAVE trial (NEJM 2023), Chieng et al. (Eur J Prev Cardiol 2022), Poole et al. (BMJ 2017), the 2023 ACC/AHA/ACCP/HRS atrial fibrillation guideline, the FDA and ACOG.

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