**Coffee & Heart Attacks**

Coffee may raise your risk of a heart attack, but only if you metabolize caffeine slowly and you're in your 50s or younger.

Researchers analyzed blood samples from roughly 2,000 Costa Rican heart attack survivors and 2,000 similar people without heart disease—to see whether they had genes that result in the fast or slow version of the enzyme that metabolizes caffeine (cytochrome P450 1A2).

Fast metabolizers—who comprised roughly half the Costa Ricans—had no increased risk of heart attack, even if they reported drinking four or more cups of regular coffee a day. Ditto for slow metabolizers in their 60s or older.

In contrast, younger slow metabolizers had a 64 percent higher risk of a heart attack if they drank at least four cups of regular coffee a day than if they drank one cup a day. The risk was 36 percent higher for slow metabolizers who drank two or three cups a day.

**What to do:** Until further studies confirm these findings—and until you can easily find out if you metabolize caffeine slowly or rapidly—you can’t tailor your caffeine intake to match your genes.


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**Meat & Stomach Cancer**

Red meat may increase the risk of stomach cancer in people who have *Helicobacter pylori* infections, according to the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition, which tracks more than 500,000 men and women in ten European countries.

The risk of what doctors call “noncardia” stomach cancer roughly doubled for every two ounces of meat people consumed per day. But the increased risk only showed up in meat eaters who were infected with *H. pylori*, a bacterium that causes most stomach ulcers.

In the U.S., experts estimate that 20 percent of people under 40 and half of those over 60 have *H. pylori*, but most of them don’t get ulcers. The study used blood tests to determine who had an *H. pylori* infection.

The researchers found no link between meat and “cardia” stomach cancer or esophageal cancer, which are on the rise in the U.S. and Europe and are linked to acid reflux. In contrast, noncardia stomach cancer rates are declining in the U.S.

**What to do:** It’s too early to say whether meat raises the risk of stomach cancer, but it’s worth cutting back anyway to reduce the risk of colon cancer and heart disease.


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**Folate & Pancreatic Cancer**

Foods rich in the B vitamin folate may lower the risk of pancreatic cancer.

Researchers tracked more than 80,000 healthy women and men in the Swedish Mammography Cohort and the Cohort of Swedish Men for seven years. The risk of pancreatic cancer was 75 percent lower in people who got the most folate (at least 350 micrograms a day) from foods than in those who got the least (less than 200 mcg a day).

Folate from supplements was not linked to the risk of pancreatic cancer.

**What to do:** Now you’ve got one more reason to eat folate-rich foods like fruits, vegetables, and beans.


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**Calcium, D, & Diabetes**

Calcium and vitamin D supplements may lower the risk of diabetes, says a study that tracked 80,000 women for 20 years.

Women who consumed the most calcium (more than 500 mg a day) from supplements had a 20 percent lower risk of diabetes than those who consumed the least (250 mg a day or less). Women who consumed the most vitamin D from supplements (more than 400 IU a day) had a 13 percent lower risk of diabetes than those who consumed the least (less than 100 IU a day).

It’s not clear why a lower risk of diabetes was linked only to calcium and vitamin D from supplements, not food. People who take those supplements may do other things—like exercise or stay trim—that lower their risk, but the researchers tried to eliminate those “confounders.”

**What to do:** Until the link with diabetes is clearer, it’s worth taking enough calcium and vitamin D to protect your bones.

If you’re 50 or younger, shoot for 1,000 mg a day of calcium and 400 IU a day of vitamin D (from food and supplements). If you’re over 50, increase the calcium to 1,200 mg. If you’re over 70, boost the vitamin D to 600 IU.

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