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The Buzz on the Benefits of Caffeine

Need an excuse to meet your friends for coffee? It may help slow cognitive decline. Researchers asked more than 7,000 older adults without dementia about their caffeine intake. After about three and one-half years, women who consumed the highest amount of caffeine (about three cups of coffee a day) were less likely to have a decline in their verbal skills.

Although studies have shown an association between certain changeable lifestyle factors and a reduced risk for cognitive decline, the National Institutes of Health says that researchers still aren't sure whether these factors can actually prevent it.

But both men and women can benefit from nutrients called antioxidants. Coffee is the single greatest source of antioxidants in the American diet. While other foods may have more, they aren't as popular. Plus, coffee is packed with polyphenols, which are known to destroy the free radicals that can create inflammation. More antioxidants mean less inflammation, which may reduce the risk for heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

And experts advise that everyone consume caffeine in moderation. High amounts may cause restlessness, heart palpitations and nausea even in healthy people. Check with your doctor to find out if you should avoid caffeine or limit the amount you consume.

For more information and resources for health and nutrition, visit the health and wellness section of the BlueCross BlueShield of Texas website.

Sources: Experience Life, October 2012; National Institute of Health, April 2010.

