

Italian-style coffee reduces the risk of prostate cancer

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Credit: George Hodan/public domain

Add another typical component of the Italian way of life to the long list of foods characterizing one of the most healthy populations in the world. This time it's coffee, prepared the Italian way. A research by the Department of Epidemiology and Prevention - I.R.C.C.S. Neuromed, Italy, in collaboration with the Italian National Institute of Health and the I.R.C.C.S. Istituto Dermopatico dell'Immacolata of Rome, shows that three or more cups a day can lower prostate cancer risk. An antitumor action confirmed also by laboratory experiments.

The study, published in the *International Journal of Cancer*, sheds light in a field still hotly debated to this day: the role of coffee, and specifically caffeine, in relation to [prostate cancer](#). A protective effect of the popular drink has already been suggested by some recent studies.

"In recent years we have seen a number of international studies on this issue," explains George Pounis, researcher at Neuromed and first author of the paper. "But scientific evidence has been considered insufficient to draw conclusions.

Moreover, in some cases, results were contradictory. Our goal, therefore, was to increase knowledge in this field and to provide a clearer view."

About 7,000 men of the Molise region who participated in the epidemiological study were observed for four years on average. "By analyzing their coffee consumption habits," explains Pounis, "and comparing them with prostate [cancer](#) cases occurring over time, we saw a net reduction of risk, 53 percent, in those who drank more than three cups a day."

Then researchers sought confirmation by testing the action of coffee extracts on [prostate cancer cells](#) in laboratory studies. They tested both caffeinated and decaffeinated varieties. Only caffeinated coffee extracts significantly reduced cancer cell proliferation and metastasization. This effect was not observed with decaf.

Maria Benedetta Donati, head of the Laboratory of Translational Medicine, says, "The observations on cancer cells allow us to say that the beneficial effect observed among the 7,000 participants is most likely due to caffeine, rather than to the many other substances contained in coffee."

Licia Iacoviello, head of the Molecular and Nutritional Epidemiology Laboratory, says, "We should keep in mind that the study is conducted on a central Italian population. They prepare [coffee](#) rigorously, the Italian way: high pressure, very high water temperature and with no filters. This method, different from those followed in other areas of the world, could lead to a higher concentration of bioactive substances. It will be very interesting, now, to explore this aspect. Coffee is an integral part of Italian lifestyle, which, we must remember, is not made just by individual foods, but also by the specific way they are prepared."

More information: George Pounis et al,

Reduction by coffee consumption of prostate cancer risk: Evidence from the Moli-sani cohort and cellular models, *International Journal of Cancer* (2017).

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