

Effects of coffee/caffeine on brain health and disease: What should I tell my patients?

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Abstract

Over the last decade, Food Regulation Authorities have concluded that coffee/caffeine consumption is not harmful if consumed at levels of 200 mg in one sitting (around 2½ cups of coffee) or 400 mg daily (around 5 cups of coffee). In addition, caffeine has many positive actions on the brain. It can increase alertness and well-being, help concentration, improve mood and limit depression. Caffeine may disturb sleep, but only in sensitive individuals. It may raise anxiety in a small subset of particularly sensitive people. Caffeine does not seem to lead to dependence, although a minority of people experience withdrawal symptoms. Caffeine can potentiate the effect of regular analgesic drugs in headache and migraine.

Lifelong coffee/caffeine consumption has been associated with prevention of cognitive decline, and reduced risk of developing stroke, Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease. Its consumption does not seem to influence seizure occurrence. Thus, daily coffee and caffeine intake can be part of a healthy balanced diet; its consumption does not need to be stopped in elderly people.