

LIVE WELL



WORK WELL

Coffee May Combat Alcohol's Effect on the Liver

According to researchers, drinking coffee may help reduce the risk of cirrhosis, a liver disease that is associated with the overindulgence of alcohol.

Cirrhosis is a potentially fatal disease that kills more than 1 million people worldwide every year. Its causes include immune disorders, excessive alcohol consumption and fatty liver disease, which is linked to obesity and diabetes.

Studies of over 430,000 participants indicated that the risk of cirrhosis was reduced with each additional cup of coffee consumed per day. That risk was reduced by the following percentages when compared to participants who didn't drink any coffee:

- One cup - 22 percent lower risk
- Two cups - 43 percent lower risk
- Three cups - 57 percent lower risk
- Four cups - 65 percent lower risk

While the studies accounted for alcohol consumption, none accounted for other cirrhosis risk factors, such as obesity and diabetes.

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Loneliness Considered a Public Health Problem

Scientists have identified significant links between illness and loneliness, making it a serious public health problem. The damage inflicted on the body by loneliness may be comparable to the effects of smoking, diabetes and obesity.

Researchers have known for years that lonely people are at a greater risk for metastatic cancer, heart attacks, Alzheimer's and other illnesses. But they haven't understood why until recently, when they discovered how the immune system responds in lonely people. What they found was that social isolation increased the activity of genes responsible for inflammation while it decreased the activity of genes that produce antibodies that fight infection.

These abnormalities were discovered in white blood cells called monocytes—one of the body's first lines of defense against infection. When monocytes are immature, they cause inflammation and reduce antibody protection. Coincidentally, these immature monocytes are abundant in lonely people.

Evolution may be partially to blame. Scientists suggest that this link may be the result of the brain's attempt to encourage socialization and cooperation as activities necessary for survival—causing us pain when we're lonely the same way we experience pain when we're hungry. The constant fear of this pain can make lonely people feel threatened, so they sometimes act negatively toward others. This makes it difficult for lonely people to make and maintain relationships and increases their chances of becoming ill.



Breakfast Burrito

- 1 ⅓ cup black beans, cooked
- 4 corn tortillas
- 2 Tbsp. red onion (chopped)
- ½ cup tomatoes (chopped)
- ½ cup salsa, low-sodium
- 4 Tbsp. plain yogurt (nonfat)
- 2 Tbsp. cilantro (chopped)

Directions

Mix beans with onion and tomatoes.

Microwave tortillas between two sheets of slightly damp paper towel on high for 15 seconds.

Divide bean mixture between the tortillas.

Fold each tortilla to enclose filling.

Place on microwave-safe dish and spoon salsa over each burrito.

Microwave on high for 15 seconds. Serve topped with yogurt and cilantro.

Makes: 4 servings

Nutritional Information (per serving)

Total Calories	155
Total Fat	2 g
Protein	7 g
Carbohydrates	18 g
Dietary Fiber	5 g
Saturated Fat	0 g
Sodium	287 mg

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

Source: USDA

Avoiding Spring Allergies

Allergy season is already upon us in certain parts of the United States, and unseasonably warm weather is partially at fault. Weather patterns related to El Nino have caused plants to bloom earlier than normal, and the combination of blooming flowers, pollen in the air and warmer temperatures is a nightmare for allergy sufferers.

Keep the following tips in mind if you are affected by seasonal allergies when spring arrives in your area:

- Take off your shoes as soon as you get home and leave them by the door. This will reduce the number of pollutants inside your home.
- Take a shower before you go to bed. This helps you avoid taking mold or pollen to bed with you.
- Avoid going outdoors when the pollen count is high, which is typically during hot, dry and windy days.
- Do some spring cleaning. Dust accumulated indoors over the course of the winter can sometimes be worse than outdoor allergies.

When Pollen Levels are Highest



From Trees
February through July
(worst during April)

From Grass
April through August
(worst during June and July)



From Weeds
June through October
(worst during September)

