



Coffee and Cigarette Consumption Not All Bad News



According to a new study it appears that drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes may protect against the rare liver disease Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC).

A new study conducted in Norway and published in *Clinical Gastroenterology and Hepatology* finds that both coffee consumption and cigarette smoking could potentially protect against primary sclerosing cholangitis (PSC), a chronic liver disease caused by chronic inflammation of the bile ducts.

Against a backdrop of increasing knowledge on coffee as a possible protective agent in other liver diseases, these findings are of great interest. Conducted by researchers at the Norwegian PSC Research Center based at Oslo University Hospital and the University of Oslo, the cross-sectional study included 240 PSC patients and 245 controls and used a questionnaire about environmental exposures.

With regards to coffee the study's findings revealed its consumption was lower in PSC patients, both currently and in early adulthood, which suggested that coffee consumption could protect against the development of the disease. In contrast, PSC patients who drank coffee had lower levels of liver enzymes in the blood, thus suggesting a beneficial effect in the liver.

Regarding cigarette smoking, only 20% of the patients reported daily cigarette smoking in comparison to 43% of the healthy controls. Additionally, it was reported that cigarette smokers acquired the disease later than non-smokers, on average by 10 years. Collectively, these observations support and confirm past observations of smoking as a possible protective factor in PSC.

PSC is a severe condition affecting mostly young adults between the ages of 30 and 40 years, and with a high risk of associated cancer of the bile ducts. It is a rare disease however, with few treatment options and thus PSC is among the most important factors for liver transplantation.

It appears that the possible protective effect of smoking against PSC is rather exclusive to this particular liver disease. Coffee consumption however, has been shown to protect against multiple other liver conditions, including liver cirrhosis and liver cancer, additionally to this first finding of protecting against PSC.

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