

Coffee Consumption and Cognitive Performance in Patients With Atrial Fibrillation



Drinking multiple cups of coffee daily may help protect against cognitive decline in individuals with atrial fibrillation (AFib), according to research published in the *Journal of the American Heart Association*.

This recent study found no reason to discourage patients with AFib from enjoying coffee. It might even be beneficial, as highlighted by the authors.

AFib, the most common heart rhythm disorder among adults, affects over 5 million people in the U.S., according to the American Heart Association (AHA). The 2023 ACC/AHA/ACCP/HRS guidelines for managing AFib note that avoiding caffeine offers no benefit in preventing heart rhythm disturbances. However, abstaining may alleviate symptoms in individuals who find caffeine exacerbates issues like rapid heartbeat, dizziness, or fatigue.

Coffee is known to enhance cognitive performance in healthy individuals, while AFib independently raises the risk of dementia. This new research explores whether coffee might counteract the increased risk of cognitive impairment associated with AFib.

The study analysed data from the ongoing Swiss Atrial Fibrillation Cohort Study (Swiss-AF), which tracks over 2,400 AFib patients in Switzerland. Participants enrolled between 2014 and 2017 completed cognitive assessments and reported their coffee consumption over the prior year, regardless of cup size or additions like sweeteners or cream.

Findings show that coffee drinkers performed better on tests of processing speed, visuomotor coordination, and attention. These scores were 11% higher among coffee consumers compared to non-consumers. Individuals drinking the most coffee had a cognitive age nearly seven years younger than those who drank the least. In addition, participants who consumed five cups daily had inflammation markers over 20% lower than those who consumed less than one cup daily. Overall, there was a clear dose-response relationship: more coffee correlated with better cognitive performance.

Regular coffee consumption may benefit cognitive health due to caffeine and other components like magnesium and vitamin B3 (niacin), which reduce inflammation. However, the AHA emphasises that these benefits pertain to plain black coffee; specialty drinks often contain excessive sugar and calories, diminishing potential health benefits.

Study authors note that while coffee has cognitive-enhancing properties, it cannot be concluded that it prevents cognitive decline in people with AFib. However, there is no reason for patients to stop drinking it unless caffeine worsens their symptoms.

Further studies are needed to explore the long-term effects of coffee consumption on cognitive health in diverse populations.

Source: [American Heart Association](#)

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