

[IMAGE]

Drinking Coffee and Preventing Gallstones

Your gallbladder stores bile, the liquid produced by the liver to digest fats. Gallstones, hard masses of cholesterol and protein, are the most common digestive-related cause of hospitalization in the United States, with symptomatic gallstone disease affecting more than 20 million Americans annually.

A 10-year study (1986-1996) examined the possibility that coffee could reduce the risk of gallstone formation. The study, published by the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, gathered data from more than 45,000 men and found a decreased risk of symptomatic gallstone disease associated with higher intake of regular (caffeinated) coffee. Subjects who drank no coffee or only one cup per day had a higher risk compared with those who drank four or more cups per day.

Does that mean you should run down to your local coffee shop and start chugging the 64-ounce café mochas? Of course not. As the authors of the study note, ³clinical recommendations on coffee consumption should be based on patients¹ individual health risks and benefits.² In other words, ask your doctor for more information.

Reference:

Letzmann MF, Willett WC, Rimm EB, et al. A prospective study of coffee consumption and the risk of symptomatic gallstone disease in men. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, June 9, 1999: Vol. 281, No. 22, pp2106-2112.

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