

[IMAGE]

Caffeine Increases Risk for Chronic Daily Headache

Before you reach for your next "cup-o'-jo," consider the consequences of excessive caffeine consumption. Caffeine has been shown to cause withdrawal headache, which may contribute to the development of chronic daily headache (CDH), or headache occurring at least 15 days per month.

To confirm such a hypothesis, researchers recruited population-cases and control subjects from three U.S. metropolitan areas as part of a study designed to address caffeine's potential involvement in CDH. Control subjects reported two to 104 headache days annually (average: 30 days), while population-cases reported 180 or more headache days per year (average: 260 days). Current and past caffeine consumption was assessed by way of self-report.

Results: High caffeine exposure, defined as being in the upper quartile of dietary consumption or using a caffeine-containing over-the-counter medication as a headache treatment, was associated with onset of CDH. Approximately one-fourth of case subjects reported taking pain medication of any type daily for headache in the previous three months.

According to the authors, "High medicinal or dietary caffeine consumption at the time of CDH onset (e.g., pre-CDH consumption) was a modest risk factor for CDH onset. Secondary analyses revealed that pre-CDH caffeine consumption might be an initiating factor in a subset of CDH sufferers, with the high-risk groups being women and those younger than age 40."

Still need a "pick-me-up" in the morning, but want to wean off caffeine? Try drinking green tea instead, which contains substantially less caffeine than coffee and has been shown to have a host of health benefits, including antioxidant and anti-cancer properties.

Reference: Scher AI, Stewart WF, Lipton RB. Caffeine as a risk factor for chronic daily headache. A population-based study. *Neurology*, Dec. 14, 2004;63(11):2022-27.

To learn more about headaches, visit www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/musculoskeletal.

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