

# Daily coffees seem to halve cancer risk

**RESEARCH** | Japanese study indicates protective effect increases with 3 to 4 cups

BY RANDOLPH SCHMID

WASHINGTON — That hot cup of coffee may do more than just provide a tasty energy boost. It also may help prevent the most common type of liver cancer.

A study of more than 90,000 Japanese found that people who drank coffee daily or nearly every day had half the liver-cancer risk of those who never drank coffee.

The American Cancer Society estimates 18,920 new cases of liver cancer were diagnosed in the United States last year and some 14,270 people died of the illness. Causes include hepatitis, cirrhosis, excess alcohol consumption and diseases causing chronic inflammation of the liver.

Animal studies have suggested a protective association of coffee with liver cancer, so the research team led by Monami Inoue of the National Cancer Centre in Tokyo analysed a 10-year public health study to determine coffee use by people diagnosed with liver cancer and people who did not have cancer.

They found the likely occurrence of liver cancer in people who never or almost never drank coffee was 547.2 cases per 100,000 people over 10 years.

But for people who drank coffee daily the risk was 214.6 cases per 100,000, the researchers report in this week's issue of the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*.

They found that the protective effect occurred in people who drank one to two cups of coffee a day and increased at three to four cups. They were unable to compare the effect of regular and decaffeinated coffee because decaf is rarely consumed in Japan.

It's the caffeine in coffee that makes some people nervous and

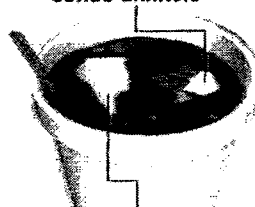
## Caffeine fix

A 10-year health study in Japan of more than 90,000 people suggests that people who drink coffee daily have half the risk of getting liver cancer that those who never drink coffee do.

Liver cancer cases per 100,000 people

214.6

Daily or almost daily coffee drinkers



547.2

People who never or almost never drank coffee

Canadian liver-cancer deaths (2000): Male 816, female 472

SOURCES: Cancer Institute of Canada, U.S. National Cancer Institute, American Cancer Society. VANCOUVER SUN/AP

it has been shown in other studies to prompt mental alertness in many people. Some studies have suggested caffeine aggravates symptoms of menopause.

A separate study reported in the same issue of the journal reported no relationship between drinking caffeinated coffee or tea and the rates of colon or rectal cancer. However, that analysis did find a 52-per-cent decline in rectal cancer among people who regularly drank two or more cups of decaffeinated coffee.

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