



food matters

with Consultant Nutritionist Sue Radd

all coffee is harmful

Caffeine has been blamed for the evils of coffee for many years, but new research indicates that all types of coffee—even decaffeinated variants—may be harmful to your heart. Coffee is worse than pure caffeine.

Filtered coffee is thought to be better for the heart than unfiltered boiled coffee (for example, plunger, percolated and Turkish), as it doesn't raise cholesterol levels. (Mind you, most people still drink unfiltered coffee because, they say, it tastes better.) Virtually all coffees served in cafes are made from the basic espresso shot (unfiltered).

According to one study, even filtered coffee will raise your homocysteine levels, an important risk factor for heart disease. In fact, homocysteine levels will rise by more than twice as much as pure caffeine when given at the same dose contained in the coffee!

The Scandinavian researchers who conducted the study now believe that other components in coffee beyond caffeine are responsible for this negative effect.

That's why all coffees—including the decaffeinated types—are unsafe for your heart. If you have a family history of heart disease or known risk factors, you're better off avoiding coffee altogether.

At high levels of consumption—eight to 10 cups a day—black tea will also raise homocysteine levels, but not at the levels defined as “moderate” (five

cups a day). Several population-based studies have found that regular tea drinkers tend to have a lower risk of heart disease.

But if you really need to drink coffee, then your best bet is the caffeine-free coffee substitutes, which are made from roasted grains, such as barley and chicory (Caro or Ecco, for example).

There are also many pleasant-tasting herbal teas from which to choose in supermarkets, for example, rosehip and hibiscus, peppermint, lemon and ginger, ginseng and lime, many of which are soothing and enjoyable.

But if you still choose to indulge in an occasional cup of coffee, my best advice is not to exceed two cups per day.

See **page 48** for some delicious, Nutrition Service coffee-free recipes.