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Coffee with milk may have an anti-inflammatory effect: Study

Polyphenols are a group of naturally occurring antioxidants important for humans, protecting them from damage or destruction

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Can something as simple as a cup of coffee with milk have an anti-inflammatory effect in humans? Apparently so, according to a new study from the University of Copenhagen, Denmark. A combination of proteins and antioxidants doubles the anti-inflammatory properties in immune cells. The researchers hope to be able to study the health effects on humans.

Whenever bacteria, viruses and other foreign substances enter the body, our immune systems react by deploying white blood cells and chemical substances to protect us. This reaction, commonly known as inflammation, also occurs whenever we overload tendons and muscles and is characteristic of diseases like rheumatoid arthritis.

Antioxidants known as polyphenols are found in humans, plants, fruits and vegetables. This group of antioxidants is also used by the food industry to slow the oxidation and deterioration of food quality and thereby avoid off flavours and rancidity. Polyphenols are also known to be healthy for humans, as they help reduce oxidative stress in the body that gives rise to inflammation.

Previous studies by the researchers demonstrated that polyphenols bind to proteins in meat products, milk and beer. In another new study they tested whether the molecules also bind to each other in a coffee drink with milk. Indeed, coffee beans are filled with polyphenols, while milk is rich in proteins.

"Our result demonstrates that the reaction between polyphenols and proteins also happens in some of the coffee drinks with milk that we studied. In fact, the reaction happens so quickly that it has been difficult to avoid in any of the foods that we've studied so far," said the researchers.

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