

INTERNATIONAL COFFEE ORGANIZATION

POSITIVELY COFFEE PROGRAMME

COFFEE AND ANTIOXIDANTS – A SUMMARY

There is considerable literature on the effects of caffeine on performance. Coffee is the major source of caffeine for most people, which suggest that consumption of coffee will have beneficial effects.

However if you ask any discerning coffee drinker what the perceived health benefits of drinking coffee are, and most will ask in return, "What health benefits?" Understandable, as during the past 20 years we have seen and heard many negative messages concerning coffee and caffeine intake. However, new research from the Institute for Coffee Studies at Vanderbilt University Medical Centre in Nashville, USA, is giving us another perspective.

At the World Coffee Conference in London in 2001, Professor Peter Martin, Director of the Institute for Coffee Studies (ICS) confirmed that: *"[The] latest scientific evidence indicates that in moderation (2 - 4 cups per day) not only is coffee not bad for you, it may offer some health benefits"*

Vanderbilt University, which is recognized worldwide as a centre of academic excellence, undertakes through the ICS, scientific investigations to identify both the potential health benefits and therapeutic uses of coffee as well as elucidate some of the fundamental mechanisms involved.

Coffee contains hundreds of compounds that may help with research into some of the most prevalent diseases of our time and one of the most exciting discoveries is the significant presence of antioxidants* within coffee beans.

Antioxidants are proven to help mitigate the chances of heart disease and cancer (the two biggest killers in the UK today). *"We are only just beginning to understand the potential health benefits of some of the hundreds of compounds in coffee as most studies have previously focused on caffeine "* said Professor Martin.

The International Coffee Organization is also aware, for example, of results from other studies that clearly demonstrate that coffee contains up to four times the antioxidant** levels found in tea. *"The prospect that coffee could reduce the risk of death from heart disease is an important and exciting lead for further study, "* said Professor Martin.



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- * Antioxidants are known to protect against “oxidative stress” by “mopping-up” damaging free radicals that are implicated in cancer, heart disease, degenerative brain disorders and ageing.
- ** Comparison of the Antioxidant Activity of Commonly Consumed Polyphenolic Beverages (Coffee, Cocoa and Tea) Prepared per Cup Serving. *J. Agric. Food Chem*, 49, 3438 -3442, 2001

