

If You Drink Coffee Make Sure it is Organic

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January 30 2010 | 13,077 views

Many Mesoamerican farmers here are starting to give up on organic coffee. The premium price that it used to fetch is disappearing.

From Mexico to Costa Rica, at least 10 percent of growers have returned to chemical fertilizers and pesticides in the past three years, at a significant cost to the environment.

Although organic still pays a premium of as much as 25 percent over conventional coffee, it's not enough to cover the added cost of production and make up for the smaller yields.

Under specialty "green" labels at places like Wal-Mart and McDonald's, organic beans and brews have become cheaper and more widely available recently.

Sources:

» [Christian Science Monitor December 29, 2009](#)

Dr. Mercola's Comments:

Americans drink 400 million cups of coffee every day, which adds up to over \$4-billion worth of imported coffee each year.

Now I am not a fan of coffee -- personally I never acquired a taste for it, and it is far from a health food -- but it is a sad state of affairs that Latin American farmers are abandoning their organic coffee crops faster than rats leaving a sinking ship.

These farmers were promised they would benefit financially from ditching their toxic pesticides in favor of organic crops, but in order to profit they need to be certified. And farmers cannot become certified organic until their soil is free of pesticides and chemical fertilizers for three years.

This means the farmers have to absorb the extra costs of organic farming for three years before they'll start to see the returns, and many just could not do it.

Meanwhile, while there is some demand for organic coffee, the market is still very small. Starbucks, for example, reported that only 3 percent of its coffee purchases in 2009 were organic.

Now, as more organic coffee growers abandon their crops, it's not only limiting the quantities available but also driving up prices. This, in turn, is keeping the organic coffee market from really merging into the mainstream ...

And this is a very bad trend not only for the environment, but also for your health.

Most Coffee is Heavily Sprayed With Pesticides

Most people are not aware that regular coffee consumption can be a significant source of pesticides. According to the CS Monitor, conventional farmers apply up to 250 pounds of chemical fertilizers per acre!

Pesticides contribute to a wide range of health problems, including prostate and other types of cancers, Parkinson's disease, and miscarriages in pregnant women.

So when you sip on your non-organic morning brew, you are also sipping on pesticide residues. Further, the U.S. has limited input and control over the type and quantity of pesticides used in the countries from which we import.

Since the vast majority of coffee, both organic and non-organic, consumed in the U.S. is grown outside this country, a return to non-organic farming of coffee beans in Latin America means a return to heavy use of pesticides.

Now is a Good Time to Kick Your Habit

If you're going to drink coffee, going organic is the "healthiest" way to do it. Of course, coffee is really not *healthy* at all.

Caffeine is a [drug](#).

It's a legal and widely available drug, but a drug nonetheless, and very powerful. My position is that coffee is not nearly as bad for your health as soda or high fructose corn syrup, but nevertheless it is something you or your family would best be served by avoiding -- or strictly limiting your consumption.

Caffeine actually alters the way your brain works, and can cause temporary changes in your behavior and mood. If you are especially sensitive to the drug, as is the case with many protein [nutritional types](#), the effects are even more pronounced.

Just a few of the symptoms of caffeine use include:

- A rise in blood pressure and stress hormone levels
- Heart palpitations
- Feeling jittery, nervous, anxious and even panicky
- Insomnia

More Coffee Adverse Effects

Coffee increases your risk for [rheumatoid arthritis](#), leukemia, stomach cancer, and [stroke](#). It can further wreak havoc on your health by:

- Raising your [cholesterol](#)

- Sending your insulin levels out of control
- Damaging your blood vessels
- Increasing your risk of heart disease
- Damaging your body's [metabolism](#)
- Increasing your risk of osteoporosis

Coffee also interferes with your body's ability to use folate and vitamins B12 and B6. These nutrients are important in order to keep your homocysteine level in the healthy range. Elevated homocysteine levels are associated with a wide range of devastating health conditions.

Coffee also stimulates your adrenals -- the hormones that activate your fight or flight response. If your adrenal hormones are stimulated too often, which is bound to happen if you are a daily coffee drinker, your adrenal glands may eventually burn out.

When your adrenals no longer function effectively, your body will go in search of a replacement hormone -- which happens to be progesterone.

Progesterone has its own full-time job to do, part of which is to keep your body's estrogen in balance. As your progesterone is used up compensating for your exhausted adrenals, you run the risk of becoming estrogen dominant.

Estrogen dominance can lead to osteoporosis.

Coffee also raises the acidity level of your blood, causing calcium to be pulled from your bones and teeth for use as a buffering agent. The combination of estrogen dominance and high blood acidity puts you at an even greater risk for osteoporosis. In fact, research has established an undeniable link between coffee consumption and hip fractures.

If You're Planning a Family, Coffee Should Not be on the Menu

If you're pregnant or planning to be, you should avoid coffee altogether.

Over 300 mg of caffeine a day, which is the equivalent of two to three eight ounce cups of coffee, can increase your risk of:

- Miscarriage
- Delivering a low birth weight baby
- Having a child with certain birth defects like cleft palate

Four or more cups of coffee a day may increase your baby's risk of SIDS.

When you're pregnant, any caffeine you ingest passes easily through the placenta to your unborn child.

It is also transferred through breast milk, and stays in your body -- and the body of your unborn child or infant -- longer than average. Your unborn baby has no ability to detoxify this drug.

If You Must Drink Coffee ...

If you simply MUST drink coffee here are a few tips to help reduce the chances of harmful effects:

1. **Use organic coffee** – Again, coffee is a heavily sprayed crop, so drinking organic coffee might reduce or eliminate the exposure to toxic herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers. The only drawback is that the countries where coffee is produced probably have less control and monitoring for compliance to organic practices. You will also be helping to protect the health of the people working in the coffee fields, as you will be helping to reduce their toxic exposure as well.

If you want to go a step further, look for fair-trade certified coffee, which means the coffee farmers have been paid fairly and treated well.

2. **"Swiss Water Process" decaf** -- If you are going to drink decaffeinated coffee, be sure that it is one that uses a non-chemical based method of decaffeination. The "Swiss Water Process" is a patented method and is the best choice. Most of the major brands are chemically decaffeinated, even if it says "Naturally Decaffeinated" right on the container. If you are unsure of the methods, contact the manufacturer.

3. **Avoid sugar and/or processed milk** -- Using [Stevia](#) is a great natural alternative to sugar. Use [unpasteurized](#), hormone free milk.

4. **Unbleached filters** -- If you use a "drip" coffee maker, be sure to use non-bleached filters. The bright white ones, which most people use, are chlorine bleached and some of this chlorine will be extracted from the filter during the brewing process.

What Makes a Healthy Coffee Alternative?

As my regular readers know, my first recommendation for a healthy beverage is always pure water. It is by far the best choice you can make.

But if you're looking to kick your coffee habit to improve your health, a cup of high-quality tea can be a great alternative as a warm, soothing morning beverage.

When I drink *green* tea, I personally prefer Matcha tea, as the color is a vibrant bright green and it is far less processed and of much higher quality than most green teas.

Also, rather than being steeped and strained like typical tea, matcha tea is made of tea leaves ground into a powder, and the powder gets added right into the water. Because you are actually consuming the whole leaf, matcha tea is said to be one of the healthiest green teas out there.

My other favorite is [Tulsi tea](#), which is a powerful adaptogenic herb that provides important therapeutic benefits. The combination of antioxidants and phytochemicals found in tulsi can promote your overall health in a variety of ways, including:

- Support for your immune system
- Improving digestion

- Increasing your resistance to stress
- Promoting healthy metabolism
- Maintaining healthy blood sugar and cholesterol levels
- Providing you with skeletal and joints support

Whatever you do, avoid substituting fruit juice or soda for coffee, as they are much worse for you. The sugar, especially fructose, is a far more serious metabolic poison than coffee.

If you use coffee as a crutch to get a quick burst of energy, remember that cultivating a healthy lifestyle will supply all the power you need to get through your day.

And, again, if you do choose to drink coffee, at least switch over to an organic variety for the sake of your health and the environment.

Related Links:

- » [Is Drinking Tea or Coffee the Smarter Choice?](#)
- » [Green Tea Extracts May Protect You From Oral Cancer](#)
- » [Coffee: How Bad Is It Really?](#)

Reference website: <http://articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2010/01/30/if-you-drink-coffee-make-sure-it-is-organic.aspx>