Scientists wake up to coffee’s benefits

That’s the headline in the British Medical Journal, BMJ just in time for exams this month, but see caveats below. A comprehensive review identified 218 meta-analyses including 17 interventional meta-analyses. Coffee consumption was more often associated with benefit than harm for a range of health outcomes. The largest risk reductions with 3 or 4 cups / day included all-cause mortality, cardiovascular mortality, & cardiovascular disease. High vs. low consumption was associated with an 18% lower risk of cancer. Consumption was also associated with a lower risk of Parkinson’s disease, Alzheimer’s disease, Diabetes type 2, kidney stones, gallstones, and metabolic & liver conditions.

Roasted coffee is a complex mixture of over 1000 bioactive compounds, some with potentially therapeutic antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, antifibrotic, or anticancer effects that provide biological plausibility for recent epidemiological associations.

CAVEATS: Harmful associations were found in pregnancy, where high versus low consumption was associated with low birth weight, preterm birth and pregnancy loss. Benefits were greater in men than in women.

What this study adds

Coffee drinking seems safe within usual patterns of consumption, except during pregnancy and in women at increased risk of fracture.