

has only been seen with regular coffee. Individuals who consume six cups of coffee a day have a 30 to 40% reduction in risk of developing type 2 diabetes. And individuals with Type 2 diabetes who consume two cups of coffee a day have a 20 to 30% reduction in cardiovascular mortality.

In addition to protection against primary hepatocellular carcinoma, in the last couple of years published studies have shown that coffee drinkers have a lower risk of developing metastatic prostate cancer, skin cancer, endometrial cancer and oropharyngeal cancer.

Recent studies have also shown that coffee drinkers have a lower risk of developing Parkinson's disease and cognitive decline. Thus, in examining the health benefits of coffee, one can observe that coffee drinkers have a lower risk of developing liver disease, Type 2 diabetes, a number of common cancers and debilitating neurological disorders such as Parkinson's disease and dementia.

IS THERE A DOWNSIDE TO COFFEE?

Coffee may worsen gastroesophageal reflux disease, incite diarrhoea in patients with irritable bowel syndrome and may produce palpitations in certain individuals. Although many physicians have cautioned pregnant women not to consume more than a cup of coffee per day for fear of miscarriage, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists issued a statement in 2010 that stated that moderate caffeine intake – less than 200 mg a day – will not increase the risk of miscarriage or preterm birth.

All in all, the benefits seem to far exceed the side-effects.

If coffee has all these miraculous health benefits, coffee drinkers should have lower mortality rates. A landmark study was published by Dr Freedman and colleagues in the *New England Journal of Medicine* on 17 May 2012. In a large prospective study, the association of coffee drinking with total and cause-specific mortality was examined in 229,119 men and 173,141 women in the

National Institutes of Health – AARP Diet and Health Study. The individuals in this study were 50 to 71 years of age. Participants with cancer, heart disease and stroke were excluded. In this large prospective cohort study, there were significant inverse associations of coffee consumption with deaths from all causes and specifically with deaths due to heart disease, pulmonary disease, diabetes, stroke, infections and injuries and accidents.

WHAT EFFECT DOES COFFEE HAVE ON ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE?

The International Society of Sports Nutrition's position on caffeine and performance was published in January of 2010. They concluded that caffeine is effective for enhancing sport performance in trained athletes when consumed in low to moderate dosages (306 mg/kg). Caffeine has been shown to enhance vigilance during bouts of extended and exhaustive exercise. Caffeine is ergogenic for sustained maximal endurance exercise. Athletes who partake in soccer and rugby, both of which have in



Image: Cyclist Cyril Dessel drinking coffee in the bus before the 11th stage of the 2006 Tour de France.