

The habit of drinking coffee every day may help slow down the aging process.

New research suggests that drinking 3–4 cups of coffee a day can lengthen telomeres—a marker of younger biological age—especially in people with severe mental disorders. Excessive consumption, however, does not offer the same benefit.

A new study suggests that people with serious mental disorders may **experience slower cellular aging** if they maintain a habit of drinking **3–4 cups of coffee per day**.

This moderate consumption is associated with **longer telomeres** – a sign of younger biological age. However, drinking more than four cups a day does not provide the same benefit. The authors suggest that the antioxidant and anti-inflammatory compounds in coffee may play a significant role.

Coffee and the rate of biological aging

A study published in the journal *BMJ Mental Health* suggests that drinking 3–4 cups of coffee a day may help slow down biological aging in people with severe mental illness.

This consumption level is associated with longer telomeres, equivalent to **appearing about 5 years younger** compared to those who do not drink coffee.

This benefit was not observed in the group drinking more than four cups per day. Interestingly, the 3–4 cup level also coincides with the maximum recommended limit by the NHS and FDA.

Telomeres are located at the ends of chromosomes and function like the plastic at the ends of shoelaces, preventing them from unraveling. Telomeres shorten with age, but this process is faster in people with severe mental disorders such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or other forms of psychosis.

Because telomeres react strongly to environmental factors – including diet – the research team questioned whether coffee might help slow this decline. Coffee has previously been noted to offer some health benefits when consumed in moderation.

The analysis is based on data from 436 adults participating in the Thematically Organized Psychosis (TOP) program in Norway from 2007 to 2018.

Of these, **259 people** had schizophrenia, and **177 people** had mood disorders (bipolar and depressive psychosis).

Participants self-reported their daily coffee consumption and were divided into four groups:

1. No drinking (44 people)
2. 1–2 cups
3. 3–4 cups (for 110 people)
4. 5 cups or more

They also provided information about smoking habits and smoking times. The results showed that those who drank **five or more cups of coffee** tended to live longer than the group who drank little or no coffee. People with schizophrenia also tended to drink more coffee than those with mood disorders.

Approximately **77%** of participants were smokers, with an average smoking duration of about 9 years. The group that drank more than 5 cups of coffee per day also had the longest smoking history.



How to measure telomere length

Telomeres were measured based on **white blood cell** samples taken from blood. When comparing the four groups, the results formed a **J-shaped** curve : those who drank **3–4 cups** had longer telomeres than the group **who did not drink**, while the group who drank **5 or more cups** showed no benefit.

People who drink about four cups a day have telomere lengths that correspond to **a biological age that are five years younger** than those who don't drink, after accounting for factors such as age, sex, race, smoking, type of disease, and treatment.

Because this is an observational study, the authors emphasize that a direct cause-and-effect relationship cannot be established. Several factors were not considered, such as the type of coffee, the time of day it was consumed, the actual caffeine intake, or the consumption of other caffeinated beverages.

However, they argue that there is still a plausible biological basis. Coffee contains many powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory compounds.

"Telomeres are highly sensitive to oxidative stress and inflammation. This further highlights the role of coffee in protecting against cellular aging in a group of individuals prone to faster-than-normal aging," the research team stated.

It is estimated that the world consumed approximately 10.56 billion kg of coffee during the period 2021–2022.

However, alongside the benefits, scientists warn that excessive consumption can damage cells and shorten telomeres due to the production of too many oxidative radicals. The World Health Organization recommends limiting caffeine intake to 400mg per day, equivalent to about 4 cups of coffee.

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