

Black, unsweetened coffee best for you



YOUR HEALTH

DR GITA MATHAI

Q Is coffee healthy? I was advised to stop drinking it.

Coffee is actually good for your health. The caffeine kick-starts your day and is also rich in beneficial antioxidants. One cup contains about 200 to 550 milligrams of antioxidants, which help reduce inflammation, lower the risk of chronic diseases and combat free radicals. It contains compounds like chlorogenic acid, which helps your body process fat and sugar. The main problem lies in the milk and sugar added to coffee, which increases its calorie content.

Anaemia

Q I used to feel tired all the time and then I got my tests done and turns out I have low haemoglobin. I was investigated for occult blood loss, but all the tests came back normal. I am unable to tolerate iron tablets.

Both non-vegetarian food — such as meat and fish — and vegetarian food — such as nuts, dried fruits, beans, peas, and lentils — are good sources of iron. Iron tablets help increase haemoglobin levels more quickly. Although iron is better absorbed on an empty stomach, if you cannot tolerate it, try taking it after meals with orange or lime juice to improve absorption. Avoid taking iron with milk, antacids or calcium supplements as these impede iron absorption.

Hip replacement

Q I have been scheduled for hip replacement surgery. How long will the implant last?

Usually, about 90 per cent of hip replacements last 15 to 18 years. With newer materials and improved surgical techniques, an even longer lifespan can be expected. To improve the outcome, it is important to follow certain measures. Before and after surgery, perform hip-strengthening exercises. Continue them regularly postoperatively. If you are overweight, aim to lose weight and ensure that lifestyle conditions such as diabetes and hypertension are well con-

trolled. These steps can help increase the longevity and success of the hip replacement.

Itchy skin

Q My face often turns red, itchy and blotchy. I bought a steroid cream and applied it. The relief was immediate but the problem keeps recurring. I now use the cream every day.

Steroid creams can be soothing and provide quick relief, but they should not be used for more than a day or two without medical advice. Long-term use can thin the skin and increase oil production, leading to “steroid acne”. It is important to identify the underlying cause of the reaction. Please consult a dermatologist for proper evaluation.

Contraceptive pills

Q Is it safe to take oral contraceptive pills for a long period?

For most healthy women, oral contraceptive pills can be safely taken for 10 to 15 years, or until menopause. They should be prescribed by a doctor and periodically reviewed. It is important to take the pills exactly as recommended. Fertility usually returns within a year after stopping the tablets.

Eyebrow colour

Q My eyebrows are turning white. Can I use hair dye on them?

Most hair dyes contain chemicals such as hydrogen peroxide and ammonia. It is best to avoid using these on the delicate skin of the face as they can cause irritation, burns or skin damage. Careless application may even harm the eyes. A safer alternative is to use cosmetic products like eyebrow pencils, kajal, mascara or eye-shadow.

Foot size

Q I feel my foot size has changed as I have got older.

This can occur due to fallen arches and widened feet. It is also common for one foot to be slightly larger than the other. It is best to try on shoes before buying them. If they feel tight, do not assume they will loosen and become comfortable with use. Instead, tight shoes are more likely to damage your feet.



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