

Too much of a good drink



**YOUR
HEALTH**

DR GITA MATHAI

Q I drink three cups of coffee a day. My friend says that's unhealthy.

On the contrary, coffee can be quite beneficial in many situations. As a pre-workout drink, it helps improve focus, reduce fatigue and sharpen concentration. Caffeine has also been shown to enhance memory, mood, reaction time and overall cognitive function. Coffee is rich in antioxidants, which help combat free radicals and reduce inflammation. Some studies even suggest that moderate coffee consumption may lower the risk of chronic diseases like heart disease and certain types of cancer.

However, too much coffee can lead to side effects such as insomnia, jitteriness, digestive issues and an increased heart rate. For most people, 2-4 cups a day is considered safe and beneficial.



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Exercise time

Q There's a lot of conflicting advice about how much exercise is enough.

The answer depends on your goal — whether you're trying to maintain general health or lose weight. For overall health, the minimum recommended is 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week — about 30 minutes a day, five days a week. Activities such as brisk walking, light jogging, swimming or dancing all count. Additionally, aim for two days of strength training covering all major muscle groups.

If your goal is weight loss, you'll need about an hour of exercise a day, five days a week — along with a calorie-controlled diet.

Cucumber peel

Q Can you eat cucumber skin?

Yes, you can. Just be sure to wash it thoroughly to remove any pesticides. The peel is rich in fibre, antioxidants

and Vitamin K. It's completely digestible and adds no calories.

Shrink with age

Q I feel like my grandparents are shrinking — or am I just growing taller?

As we age, we naturally lose some height. This is due to bone and cartilage loss in the spine, the weakening of muscles that support posture and the flattening of the arches in our feet. This typically begins around age 40. By 70, men lose an average of one inch and women lose about two inches.

UTI bane

Q My urine looks frothy. Is that normal?

Occasionally, frothy urine is harmless — especially if it's passed forcefully, creating bubbles. But if the frothiness persists or the urine smells different, it could be a sign of a urinary tract infection or excess protein in the urine, which may be linked to kidney issues or diabetes. If the problem continues, it's best to get it checked.

Cold caution

Q When can I exercise after getting a cold?

A good rule of thumb: if your symptoms are above the neck (like a runny nose or sore throat), light exercise such as walking is usually fine. But if you have a fever, body aches or chest congestion, it's best to rest. Resume workouts at least three days after full recovery. If exercising makes you feel worse, take another two days off.

Mother's milk

Q If I don't feed my baby for a day, will the breast milk go bad?

Breast milk doesn't spoil inside the breast. It's produced on demand through a hormonal reflex when the baby suckles. However, not breastfeeding for a day can lead to breast engorgement, pain and even infection. If breast milk is expressed and not stored properly, it can spoil — especially in warm or unhygienic conditions.

The writer has a family practice at Vellore and is the author of *Staying Healthy in Modern India*. If you have any questions on health issues please write to yourhealthgm@yahoo.co.in