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## World UK

# Coffee 'protects against Parkinson's'

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Coffee drinkers were less likely to develop Parkinson's

Women who drink coffee are less likely to develop Parkinson's disease than anyone else, research suggests.

Two studies published in the medical journal *Neurology* reveal strong links between gender and coffee intake and the risks of getting the disease.

A study by researchers in Italy has found that men are twice as likely to develop symptoms of Parkinson's compared with women.

A study in the US found that people who drink four or more cups of coffee each day are less likely to develop the disease.

The Italian study followed a group of more than 4,000 elderly people over three years.

### Gender dilemma

None had any signs of the disease at the beginning of the study but 42 had developed symptoms by the end. Of these, 29 were men and just 13 were women.

Researchers do not know why Parkinson's is more common in men. One theory is that estrogen protects women from the disease.

The second study compared two groups of 196 people.

The first group included people with Parkinson's disease while those in the second group had shown no symptoms of the

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condition.

The researchers found that more people in the second group drank coffee, 92% compared to 83%.

They also found that among those without symptoms of the disease, more were heavy coffee drinkers.

More than a third of those in the second group drank four or more cups of coffee per day compared with just one in five of those who had developed the disease.

### **Late symptoms**

The study also discovered that people who drank coffee developed symptoms of the disease later in life - by as many as eight years on average.

The researchers also found that those who smoked and those who were alcoholics were less likely to have Parkinson's.

But Dr Demetrius Maraganore, from the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, US, who carried out the study, said more research was needed.

He said the findings did not offer convincing evidence that coffee protects against Parkinson's.

He added that individuals should not boost their consumption of coffee, alcohol or tobacco as a result.

Parkinson's is a brain disease and causes severe difficulty in performing movements including walking, talking, swallowing and smiling. This causes sufferers to shake and experience muscle stiffness.

### **Causes unknown**

The symptoms are caused by the loss of cells in a certain part of the brain that produce dopamine - an important message-carrying chemical or neurotransmitter linked with movement.

But no-one has been able to find out why those cells get destroyed in the first place.

Sufferers eventually die from secondary complications such as pneumonia, urinary

tract infection, pressure sores, septicaemia and stroke.

The condition is treated with drugs and there is no cure. It affects around 120,000 people in the UK.

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