

## Coffee's Brain Benefits

Sipping coffee regularly has been associated with a lower risk of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases. Now a laboratory study from the Krembil Research Institute in Canada has found a possible explanation for that benefit: phenylindanes, compounds that develop as coffee beans are roasted and give drinks like espresso their bitter tang. Phenylindanes seem to prevent beta amyloid and tau proteins – which pile up in the brains of people with Alzheimer's and Parkinson's – from clumping into plaque that can lead to the death of the brain cells. Dark roast coffees have the highest levels of phenylindanes, whether they're caffeinated or decaffeinated.



## Can Mood Affect Blood Sugar

The most optimistic women in a recent 14-year study were 12 percent less likely to develop type 2 diabetes than those with the least positive attitude. A negative outlook may be linked to higher levels of inflammation and the "stress" hormone cortisol, which are associated with insulin resistance, researchers say. If you're a negative thinker, taking small steps toward a more positive attitude may help improve your health.

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## 7 Anti-Pest Tips to Follow This Spring

Controlling ticks and mosquitoes in your yard can protect your health.

It is becoming increasingly evident that we will be enjoying the outdoor spaces at our own homes more this year than ever before. Since it's all about protecting ourselves right now, this is a great time to take steps to protect you and your family from the diseases carried by ticks, mosquitoes and other biting pests that arrive with the warmer weather. The annual numbers of infections from Lyme disease and West Nile virus reported to the CDC more than tripled between 2004 and 2016 in the US. But before you spray your yards with pesticides, opt for effective yet less drastic methods. Here are some of the best ways to thwart the bugs.

1. **Eliminate Standing Water.** Mosquito larvae must live in water to grow into the buzzing bugs. Once a week, eliminate or empty areas with standing water, such as birdbaths, buckets, tires, planters, wheelbarrows, clogged rain gutters, and even holes in tree trunks or stumps.
2. **Protect Your Pets.** Ticks can spread disease to cats and dogs. Talk to your vet about getting an effective anti-tick product for your pet, whether that's a collar or a topical or oral medication. To keep your pets safe, be sure to follow the directions on the label about which age and species the product is for. Certain items for dogs can be toxic to cats, for instance.
3. **Keep Your Yard Neat.** Ticks – and many of the rodents they attach to – like to hide in shady areas created by tall grasses, brush and debris. Eliminate bushy areas and ground cover vegetation, especially where there's a lot of traffic, such as walkways or areas where kids play. Don't leave grass clippings or fallen leaves on your lawn – collect and compost them instead.
4. **Consider Using Bait Boxes.** These devices contain bait attractive to rodents and cause them to come into contact with pesticide after being enticed inside. The pesticide doesn't harm the mouse but kills the ticks that might be attached to the animal. A 2017 study published in the Journal of Medical Entomology found that the use of bait boxes significantly reduced tick populations in the areas around where the devices were installed.
5. **Use Repellent.** Apply insect repellent whenever you might be exposed to ticks or mosquitoes. Our tests have found that repellents with 15 to 30 percent DEET, 20 percent picaridin, or 30 percent oil of lemon eucalyptus may be most effective against mosquitoes. (These are your best bet against ticks, too.) Frequent reapplication isn't necessary. If you're in wooded or grassy areas, wear closed-toe shoes and long-sleeved tops, and tuck your pants into your socks. (Wearing light-colored clothing also helps make it easier to spot ticks.) At the end of the day, check yourself for ticks that may have attached themselves to your body.
6. **Create a Mulch Moat.** Use dry wood chips or gravel to create a 3-foot-wide barrier between your yard and wooded area. The dry, exposed moat discourages ticks from crawling onto your lawn – and can warn people who cross the mulch that they may be entering a tick heavy zone.
7. **Fence Your Yard.** Deer are carriers of ticks, and keeping them off your property may help reduce the number of certain species of ticks in the area, studies have shown. Consider fencing your yard to keep deer out.

## The Best Way to Stay Active

Exercises that make it easier to do the lifting and bending you want.

Exercising regularly can improve your health and mood, but another key benefit is especially important as you get older. Certain workouts can make the activities of everyday life – walking up and down stairs, playing with grandkids, carrying groceries – easier. Experts call this functional fitness.

Workouts focused on functional training and balance also reduce the risk of falls, according to a recent review. The older we get, it really is functional fitness that matters.

How do you know how functionally fit you are? Ask your doctor or trainer about the Senior Fitness Test, which can be done in 30 or 40 minutes. It involves simple activities that measure your strength, flexibility, balance, endurance and aerobic fitness.

You can take these test items and actually turn them into exercise. Practicing them regularly can help make daily life easier.

What follows are four tests of key functional skills included in the Senior Fitness Test. Do them at least twice per week as part of a resistance-training plan, which typically uses weights to build strength and power. (That's the ability to use strength with speed; for example, to help you catch yourself before a fall.) Talk to your doctor or practice with a trainer before trying these on your own.

**30-second sit-stand.** See how many times you can stand up from a chair and sit back down in 30 seconds with your arms folded across your chest. (If needed, you can use your arms at first to help you steady as you build up your strength.)

This is a test of lower-body strength and power, which is important for walking, climbing stairs, and getting up safely.

**Arm curls.** See how many times you can curl a light weight (5 pounds for women, 8 pounds for men) in 30 seconds. Try it first with your left arm, then your right. If you don't have weights you can practice with soup cans.

Arm curls test muscular endurance and upper-body strength, which is important for carrying heavy items like groceries.

**8-foot get-up-and-go.** Stand up from a chair, walk to an object you've placed 8 feet away, go around it, then go back and sit down. As you practice – carefully – see whether you can do this more quickly.

This tests balance and agility, which are helpful when you need to, say, get the phone quickly or answer the door.

**Back scratch.** Reach your left arm over your left shoulder and the other behind your back. See how close you can bring your hands together. Repeat on the right side. You can improve your performance on the back scratch by holding a towel in one hand and pulling at it with the other gently. Don't push too hard if this hurts.

This is a test of upper-body flexibility, which you use for activities such as brushing your hair and getting dressed.

## What About the Sugar in Fruit?

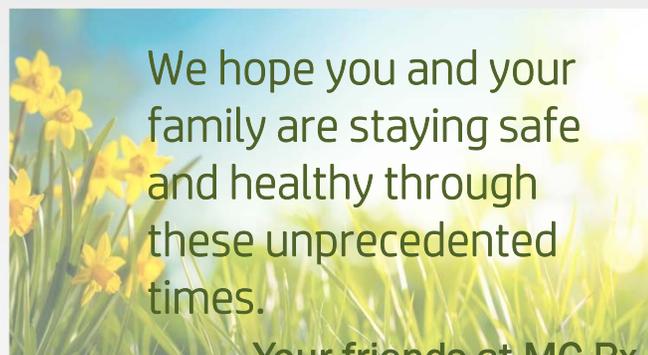
Though the sugar you stir into your morning coffee and the sugar in a peach are chemically similar, your body doesn't process them in the same way.

Here's how the two differ.

**Fruit's sugars are absorbed more slowly.** The sugars in fruit are encased inside the plant's cells, so your body has to work harder to break them down. The fiber in the fruit further slows digestion. Both factors mean when you eat fruit, you don't get the rapid rise in blood sugar that, if it occurs frequently, can raise the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

**Fruit isn't all that sugary.** It packs a lower sugars content than, say, a fruit dessert. For example, 2/3 cup of raspberries has about 4 grams of sugars. Compare that with the 33 grams in a 2/3 cup of Talenti Roman Raspberry Sorbetto, which contains raspberries but also sugar and dextrose (a type of sugar). Adults should have 1 ½ to 2 cups of fruit per day.

**Fruit boosts health.** It's packed with antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals, plus fiber. And there's evidence that people who eat fruit have lower risks of hypertension, type 2 diabetes, certain forms of cancer, and other diseases; fruit may even help with weight control. These benefits might not extend to fruit juice, however, even if it contains no added sugars. Juices are a much more concentrated source of sugars. For example, a cup of apple slices has 50 calories and 11 grams of sugars, and a cup of apple juice has twice those amounts. Plus, juice lacks the fiber that slows the release of the sugars into the bloodstream.



We hope you and your family are staying safe and healthy through these unprecedented times.

— Your friends at MC-Rx