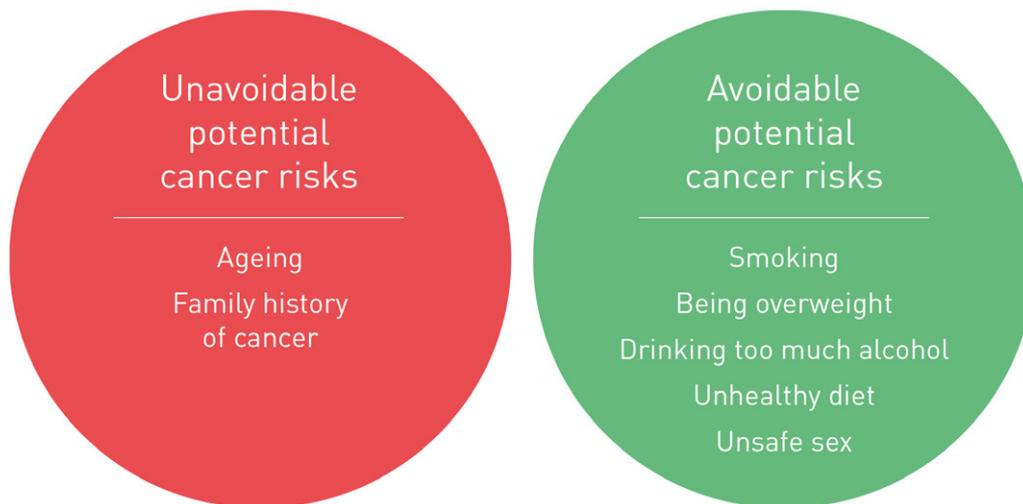




Questions patients ask

Cancer is one of the biggest health risks in Europe. Patients are understandably worried about how [their diet and lifestyle](#) could increase — or decrease — their risk of developing cancer. It can be difficult to remain up-to-date with the latest health advice, and media reports of new medical studies can sometimes be confusing rather than helpful.



Sources: National Cancer Institute [2015], Macmillan [2012]

Healthcare professionals play a vital role in informing and reassuring patients about cancer and one of Europe's favourite drinks — coffee. Below are some common questions asked by patients, with answers based on peer-reviewed scientific evidence.

Q: Does coffee or caffeine cause cancer?

A: No. Many studies have looked at the potential association between drinking coffee and the risk of developing cancer. Overall, the scientific evidence suggests there is no association between moderate coffee consumption at 3–5 cups per day and an increased risk of developing cancer.

Q: Is coffee associated with any type of cancer?

A: Some studies have suggested a possible association between moderate coffee consumption and bladder and lung cancer risk. However, in both cases it is likely that additional lifestyle factors are involved in the potential association, such as drinking alcohol and tobacco smoking, and further research is needed to confirm these results^{1,2}. The European Food Safety Authority concluded in their *Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine* that 'caffeine intakes from all sources up to 400 mg per day (about 5.7 mg/kg bw per day for a 70-kg adult) consumed throughout the day do not give rise to safety concerns for healthy adults in the general population'³. They reported that there was no evidence for health concerns between caffeine intake at this level and cancer risk.

Q: Is it true that drinking coffee is associated with bladder cancer?

A: Although some studies have shown an increased risk of developing bladder cancer in coffee drinkers, one review did not show an increased risk⁴. The increased risk is related neither to the amount of coffee, nor how long an individual has been a coffee drinker. This suggests that coffee does not directly affect the risk of bladder cancer, and that the increased risk is likely to be the result of other factors such as drinking alcohol or tobacco smoking^{1,5,6}.



Q: Does coffee or caffeine cause prostate cancer?

A: No, there is no evidence to suggest that drinking coffee is associated with an increased chance of developing prostate cancer^{7,8}.

Q: Is it true that drinking coffee is associated with lung cancer?

A: Some research has suggested that drinking more than 5 cups of coffee per day may increase the risk of developing lung cancer², although one review suggested the effect may vary by sex and geographical region⁹. It is likely that any association between drinking coffee and developing lung cancer is the result of additional factors such as tobacco smoking². Further research is needed to confirm these results.

Q: Does coffee or caffeine cause breast cancer?

A: Research has found that drinking coffee is not associated with an increase in the risk of developing breast cancer in postmenopausal women¹⁰⁻¹³. In premenopausal women, much of the research suggests that drinking coffee may help to reduce the risk of developing breast cancer^{14,15} although other results differ, and more work is required before firm conclusions can be drawn.

Q: Does coffee or caffeine cause bowel cancer?

A: No, in fact research has consistently shown that drinking coffee may help to reduce the risk of developing bowel cancer^{16,17,18,19}.

Q: Does coffee or caffeine cause stomach cancer?

A: No, the majority of research has found no association between drinking coffee and developing stomach cancer²⁰ particularly in women and in Europeans^{21,22}.

Q: Does coffee or caffeine cause liver cancer?

A: No, in fact the majority of research suggests that coffee consumption is associated with a significant reduction in the risk of developing liver cancer²³.

Q: Why has some research suggested that coffee drinking is associated with an increased risk for certain cancers?

A: Such studies tend to be in the minority and are often inconclusive. There are also other factors that need to be considered, for example, smoking is well known to be associated with increased cancer risk, and smokers are also more likely to be coffee drinkers, which may lead to an unfounded association between coffee and cancer.

Q: Does the type of coffee I drink affect my risk of cancer?

A: Some research has shown a difference between decaffeinated and caffeinated coffee and the development of cancer. However, the results have been very variable and no reliable patterns have been established. Only one study to date has looked at the influence of coffee preparation (boiled vs. filtered)²⁴ and further research is needed to draw any conclusions.

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