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1 **Coffee consumption and cardiovascular disease: a condensed review of**  
2 **epidemiological evidence and mechanisms**

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28 **ABSTRACT**

29 Coffee is one of the most widely consumed beverages, and some studies have suggested it  
30 may be related to cardiovascular disease (CVD), the leading cause of poor health in the  
31 world. This manuscript reviews the evidence on the effect of habitual coffee consumption on  
32 CVD incidence and mortality. The review is based mostly on observational studies and meta-  
33 analyses of the literature. In healthy people, compared to not consuming coffee, habitual  
34 consumption of 3-5 cups of coffee per day is associated with a 15% reduction in the risk of  
35 CVD, and higher consumption has not been linked to elevated CVD risk. Moreover, in  
36 comparison with no coffee intake, usual consumption of 1-5 cups/day is associated with a  
37 lower risk of death. In people who have already suffered a CVD event, habitual consumption  
38 does not increase the risk of a recurrent CVD or death. However, hypertensive patients with  
39 uncontrolled blood pressure should avoid consuming large doses of caffeine. In persons with  
40 well-controlled blood pressure, coffee consumption is probably safe, but this hypothesis  
41 should be confirmed by further investigations.

42 **KEY Words:** Coffee, cardiovascular disease, mortality, cohort studies, experimental studies,

43 We summarize the evidence on the effects of habitual coffee consumption on cardiovascular  
44 disease (CVD) incidence and mortality. This topic is important because coffee is one of the  
45 most widely consumed beverages that has been shown to be modulate the risk of non-  
46 communicable diseases<sup>1</sup> and because CVD is the leading cause of poor health in the world. In  
47 2015 CVD accounted for 32% of all deaths and 14% of disability-adjusted life years (sum of  
48 the years of life lost due to premature mortality and the years lost due to disability).<sup>2</sup>

49 We begin with a description of the composition of coffee, to understand plausible biological  
50 mechanisms derived from its components. Next we present an overview of the designs of  
51 studies on the effects of coffee on CVD, which helps to understand their strengths and  
52 limitations; we also focus on the main characteristics of coffee consumers among  
53 participants in large epidemiologic investigations because some characteristics may  
54 confound the relationship between coffee consumption and CVD, and thus should be  
55 controlled for in the analyses. Then, we describe the natural history of CVD, because it  
56 serves to identify the potential targets of coffee on CVD. The core of this article is a summary  
57 of the evidence on the effect of coffee on CVD and its risk factors. We end with some  
58 conclusions and a brief research agenda to further increase knowledge on the relationship  
59 between coffee and CVD.

60 For the review of the effect of coffee on CVD and its risk factors we searched PubMed  
61 between 1 January 2010 and 31 August 2017; the search terms were “coffee,” “caffeine,”  
62 “cardiovascular disease” “cholesterol”, “blood pressure”, “review” and “meta-analysis”. We  
63 considered only studies in English or Spanish conducted with humans. We did not focus on  
64 individuals investigations, but we have outlined a few of them because they were large  
65 studies and seminal articles that have influenced research in the field, or may have

66 substantially contributed to pooled results in meta-analyses. The final reference list also  
67 includes articles retrieved from the identified reviews and was generated because of their  
68 relevance to the focus of this paper.

## 69 **Coffee composition**

70 Coffee has a very complex chemical composition, which includes caffeine, phenolic  
71 compounds, diterpenes, magnesium, trigonelline, quinides and lignans, among many others  
72 TOC graphic).<sup>3</sup> The relative proportions of these compounds vary with the type of coffee  
73 bean, degree of roasting, and method of filtration. It is known that caffeine intake stimulates  
74 the release of adrenaline, producing multiple effects on the cardiovascular system such as  
75 increase blood pressure and heart rate, endothelial dysfunction, and reduced insulin  
76 sensitivity.<sup>4,5</sup> These effects are consistent with the increased risk of suffering a coronary  
77 event or a stroke in the hours following coffee consumption.<sup>6,7</sup> Nevertheless, studies in  
78 humans and animal models have yielded controversial results about the health effects of  
79 caffeine, which can be explained by population, type and dose of caffeine and low statistical  
80 power.<sup>8</sup>

81 By contrast, other components in coffee, such as phenolic compounds (specially chlorogenic  
82 acid) magnesium, trigonelline and others, have been found to improve glucose and lipid  
83 metabolism, and to exert an antioxidant activity that reduces chronic inflammation and  
84 oxidative stress in the atherosclerotic process.<sup>9</sup> Thus, it is plausible that the potentially  
85 harmful acute effects of caffeine could be offset by the beneficial effects of these other  
86 components in habitual drinkers, who have already developed caffeine tolerance.<sup>9</sup>  
87 Accordingly, habitual intake of total caffeine, regular coffee or decaffeinated coffee are not  
88 associated with higher risk of sudden cardiac death.<sup>10</sup>

89 **Main study designs on the CVD effects of coffee**

90 The effect of coffee on biological risk factors of CVD is usually assessed with clinical trials,  
91 which are experimental studies where individuals are assigned (in most cases, randomly) to  
92 coffee or caffeine intake versus no intake. Their main advantage is appropriate control of  
93 extraneous variables, so that trials can provide sufficient evidence of the effect of coffee.  
94 Unfortunately, these studies have short duration and, thus, may not represent habitual  
95 coffee consumption. By contrast, long-term effects of habitual coffee intake are mostly  
96 examined with observational studies (e.g., prospective cohort studies) which have a large  
97 sample size and continued follow-up. Their main limitations are that they cannot totally  
98 exclude reverse causation (e.g., subclinical disease or poor health status leading to change in  
99 coffee intake, rather than the contrary) and residual confounding. This is the case where  
100 some variables mix their effect with that of coffee. A good example is confounding by  
101 tobacco smoking in investigations that have found an increased risk of cancer associated  
102 with heavy coffee intake; this resulted from the fact that smoking is a very strong cause of  
103 cancer and is correlated with coffee consumption, so the individual effects of tobacco and  
104 coffee may not be easily separated in data analyses.

105 In practice, establishing a causal effect of coffee on CVD requires consistent evidence from  
106 clinical trials on cardiovascular risk factors and from observational studies on CVD events, as  
107 well as certain biological plausibility: compounds in coffee should show biological effects  
108 compatible with the purported effect of coffee on CVD (see next section).<sup>9</sup> Lastly, the dose-  
109 response relationship between coffee and CVD should be assessed, because the effect of  
110 coffee could vary across levels of consumption, as well as its risk-benefit ratio. This

111 information is crucial to elaborate coffee consumption guidelines addressed to the general  
112 population or to specific subgroups.

113 Characteristics of coffee drinkers could confound the association between coffee and CVD.  
114 Compared to non-coffee drinkers, those with heavier intake of coffee have shown worse  
115 health behaviors. For instance, in some studies coffee drinkers have a higher frequency of  
116 smoking, greater alcohol intake and worse diet, and they do less physical activity.<sup>11,12</sup> Also,  
117 some studies have shown that coffee drinkers have lower educational level and higher body  
118 weight than non-drinkers.<sup>12</sup> Thus, statistical analyses in observational studies should attempt  
119 to separate the health effects of these variables from those of coffee. This is particularly  
120 important for coffee and smoking. Given the strong correlation between coffee and tobacco  
121 smoking, and the fact that tobacco smoking is a potent CVD risk factor, multivariate  
122 adjustment may not suffice; thus, a better assessment of the effects of coffee may require  
123 restricting the analyses to never smokers.<sup>13</sup>

#### 124 **Natural history of cardiovascular disease**

125 This comprises the sequence of events that begins with the initial exposure to the main CVD  
126 risk factors, which triggers the disease process, continues with the occurrence and diagnosis  
127 of CVD, and ends with its resolution as total recovery, sequelae (e.g., disability), or death  
128 (Figure 1).<sup>14</sup> Among CVD risk factors, the most important are genetic and epigenetic factors,  
129 family history of premature disease, environmental contaminants (e.g., atmospheric  
130 pollution, noise), and health behaviors, such as tobacco smoking, physical activity,  
131 sedentariness and diet, which includes both food and beverage intake (e.g., coffee). If these  
132 risk factors remain elevated during a sufficient time, atherosclerosis develops and is  
133 frequently accompanied by alterations in biological risk factors, including body weight, blood

134 pressure, lipidemia, serum glucose, endothelial dysfunction, inflammation and thrombosis,  
135 among others.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, a substantial fraction of individuals with continuous alteration of  
136 these biological factors may subsequently suffer an acute CVD event, such as myocardial  
137 infarction or stroke. Some of these events lead to death in a few hours or months but,  
138 among survivors, chronic forms of CVD disease (e.g. chronic heart failure) and disability  
139 could develop; these individuals may, in turn, suffer recurrent episodes of CVD (Figure 1).  
140 Accordingly, this review examines the associations between coffee and: 1) biological CVD  
141 risk factors; 2) atherosclerosis; 3) acute CVD events; 4) all-cause death; and 5) recurrent CVD  
142 events (Figure 1).

## 143 **Cardiovascular effects of coffee consumption**

### 144 ***1. Effects of coffee on biological risk factors of cardiovascular disease***

145 As regards habitual coffee consumption and blood lipids, a meta-analysis of 12 trials with  
146 1017 individuals aged 26-49 years followed during a mean of 45 days, found that coffee  
147 intake was associated with an average increase of 8.1 mg/dl for total cholesterol (TC), 5.4  
148 mg/dl for low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C) and 12.6 mg/dl for triglycerides (TG).<sup>15</sup>  
149 The increase in TC was greater in trials using unfiltered coffee and regular coffee; also those  
150 who had hyperlipidemia were more sensitive to the cholesterol-raising effect of coffee.  
151 Moreover, meta-regression analyses revealed a positive dose-response relationship between  
152 coffee intake and TC, LDL-C and TG.<sup>15</sup> Of note is that coffee diterpenes, cafestol and kahweol  
153 are the primary hypercholesterolemic agents in boiled coffee, and that their removal by  
154 filters significantly reduces the lipid-raising effect of coffee.<sup>16,17</sup> Recent evidence indicates  
155 that coffee, which is low in diterpenes and caffeine, does not alter the blood lipid profile.<sup>18</sup>



156 Also of note is that instant coffee does not have cafestol and kawheol. Finally, more research  
157 in needed on the lipemic effect of espresso coffee.

158 As for blood pressure (BP), a meta-analysis of 10 trials with people aged 25-73 years,  
159 followed during a mean of 60 days (enough to have developed tolerance), found no  
160 differences in BP by consumption of total, regular or decaffeinated coffee, but there was  
161 substantial heterogeneity across studies.<sup>19</sup> It is not clear why the pressor effects of caffeine  
162 may be attenuated when administered via coffee, but it has been suggested that  
163 polyphenols favorably regulate BP, compensating for the effects of caffeine. Moreover, a  
164 dose-response meta-analysis of 7 cohorts, including 205,349 individuals and 44,120 cases of  
165 hypertension, found a 1% decreased risk of hypertension for each additional cup of coffee  
166 per day. Among subgroups, there were significant inverse associations for females,  
167 caffeinated coffee, and studies conducted in the US with longer follow-up. However,  
168 smoking-related variables weakened the strength of association between coffee  
169 consumption and risk of hypertension.<sup>20</sup> Thus, there is no epidemiological evidence of a  
170 detrimental effect of coffee on hypertension risk.

171 Among hypertensive patients, a review of 5 trials showed that the administration of 200-300  
172 mg caffeine produced a mean increase of 8.1 mm Hg in systolic BP and of 5.7 mm Hg in  
173 diastolic BP. The increase in BP was observed in the first hour after caffeine intake and lasted  
174 3 h. Additionally, in 3 studies of the longer-term effect (2 weeks) of regular coffee  
175 consumption, no increase in BP was observed when it was compared with a caffeine-free  
176 diet or with decaffeinated coffee.<sup>21</sup> However in a recent cross-sectional study of  
177 hypertensive older patients, we found that habitual coffee consumption of  $\geq 3$  cups/day was  
178 associated with uncontrolled BP, as evidenced from 24-h ambulatory BP monitoring.<sup>22</sup>

179 Therefore, it is prudent that physicians and other health professionals ask hypertensive  
180 patients, in particular those with uncontrolled BP, about habitual coffee consumption; and  
181 moderating coffee intake may be a simple strategy to maintain or improve BP control among  
182 the elderly.

183 The metabolic syndrome (MS) is a cluster of biological factors, including abdominal obesity,  
184 dyslipidemia, high blood pressure and elevated serum glucose, which behaves as an  
185 important risk factor for diabetes and CVD. A meta-analysis of 8 studies, published up to  
186 March 2015, reported that individuals with the highest coffee consumption were 13% less  
187 likely to have the MS. However, there was substantial heterogeneity in results between  
188 studies; also, the association of coffee and individual components of MS was not consistent  
189 across the studies.<sup>23</sup> There is some evidence that that favorable metabolic effects of  
190 caffeine-containing coffee may partly operate through associations with serum  
191 concentrations of adiponectin. A protein hormone secreted from adipose tissue that  
192 modulates several metabolic processes, including glucose regulation and fatty acid  
193 oxidation. Specifically, in women from the Nurses' Health Study, habitual consumption of  $\geq 4$   
194 cups/day of caffeine-containing coffee has been associated with 20% higher serum  
195 adiponectin concentrations than those associated with habitual consumption of  $< 4$  cups of  
196 coffee daily;<sup>24</sup> this indicates that increased adiponectin may play a role in the beneficial  
197 effects of coffee on insulin sensitivity (an underlying mechanisms of the MS).

198 Coffee is the main source of polyphenols in the diet of European populations, and it  
199 accounts for up to 40% of polyphenol intake, mostly in the form of chlorogenic, ferulic, and  
200 p-coumaric acids.<sup>25,26,27</sup> Given that these compounds reduce oxidative stress and chronic  
201 inflammation, and that these processes play a key role in the pathogenesis of

202 atherosclerosis, this could be a biological pathway for the association between coffee and  
203 CVD.<sup>28</sup> In a seminal work in the Nurses' Health Study I cohort, no appreciable differences in  
204 plasma concentrations of markers of inflammation and endothelial function were found  
205 across categories of regular coffee intake in healthy women. In those with type 2 diabetes,  
206 higher regular and decaffeinated coffee consumption were associated with lower plasma  
207 concentrations of E-selectin and C-reactive protein.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, other observational  
208 studies<sup>30-33</sup> and clinical trials<sup>34-35</sup> on the effect of coffee on inflammatory markers, such as C-  
209 reactive protein and Interleukin-6, have yielded inconsistent results (direct, inverse, and no  
210 associations were reported).

## 211 ***2. Coffee consumption and atherosclerosis***

212 Several studies have found inconsistent results on the association between coffee  
213 consumption and coronary artery calcium, which is a marker of coronary atherosclerosis;  
214 specifically, two cross-sectional studies reported a protective effect of coffee on  
215 atherosclerosis<sup>36,37</sup> while two longitudinal studies found no association.<sup>38,39</sup> The Rotterdam  
216 Coronary Calcification Study reported an inverse association between coffee consumption  
217 and coronary calcification in women, but not in men,<sup>36</sup> and in the Kangbuk Samsung Health  
218 Study moderate coffee consumption was associated with a lower prevalence of subclinical  
219 coronary atherosclerosis.<sup>37</sup> By contrast, in the CARDIA study no substantial association was  
220 observed between coffee or caffeine intake and coronary and carotid atherosclerosis,<sup>38</sup> and  
221 in the MESA study regular coffee intake was not statistically linked to coronary artery  
222 calcium progression; however, caffeine intake was marginally inversely associated with  
223 coronary artery calcium progression.<sup>39</sup>

## 224 ***3. Coffee consumption and cardiovascular disease events***

225 During 14 years of follow-up among men participating in the Health Professionals Follow-up  
226 study, regular coffee consumption of up to 6 cups/day was not associated with a higher risk  
227 of total, fatal or non-fatal coronary heart disease (CHD). Also, habitual consumption of  
228 decaffeinated coffee or tea, and caffeine intake, were not linked to CHD risk. Moreover, in  
229 this large study, coffee consumption was not associated with higher levels of blood lipids.<sup>40</sup>  
230 Similar results were obtained during a 20-year follow-up of women in the Nurses' Health  
231 Study.<sup>40</sup>

232 As regards stroke, results from women followed during 24 years in the Nurses' Health Study  
233 showed that habitually consuming either 2-3 or 4 cups of coffee per day was associated with  
234 a 20% lower risk; these results applied to both ischemic and hemorrhagic stroke. The  
235 association was stronger among never and past smokers than among current smokers. Other  
236 drinks containing caffeine such as tea and caffeinated soft drinks were not associated with  
237 stroke. Finally, decaffeinated coffee showed a trend toward lower risk of stroke after  
238 adjustment for consumption of regular coffee.<sup>41</sup>

239 The above-mentioned investigations were also included in a recent meta-analysis of 36  
240 studies, with 1.2 million participants and 36,352 CVD events. The main finding was a  
241 nonlinear association between coffee and CVD risk; compared to non-coffee drinkers, the  
242 risk of total CVD, of CHD and of stroke was 10-15% lower in moderate drinkers (3-5 cups of  
243 coffee/day). Higher consumption of coffee was not associated with elevated CVD disease  
244 risk.<sup>42</sup> Results were robust in stratified analyses according to disease endpoints, geographic  
245 locations of the studies, type of coffee, and baseline characteristics of the study populations.  
246 However, most of the participants' coffee consumption in the reviewed studies was

247 probably in the form of filtered coffee; thus, the results may not apply to unfiltered coffee  
248 (e.g., French press, Scandinavian boiled, or Turkish/Greek coffee).<sup>42</sup>

249 The authors of the aforementioned study argued that the nonlinear U-shaped relationship  
250 between coffee consumption and risk of CVD might be due to a combination of beneficial  
251 and detrimental effects.<sup>42</sup> As commented above, coffee may improve glucose metabolism  
252 and reduce inflammation and LDL-oxidation. However, caffeine in coffee may produce short-  
253 term elevation of BP and reduce BP control in hypertensive patients. It is possible that the  
254 beneficial effects are greater than the adverse effects for moderate coffee consumption,  
255 whereas for heavy consumption the detrimental effects may counterbalance beneficial  
256 effects.

257 Heart failure is one of the CVD epidemics of the XXI century. Mostofsky et al. have reviewed  
258 5 independent prospective studies of coffee consumption and heart failure risk, including  
259 6522 heart failure events and 140,220 participants.<sup>43</sup> They found a statistically significant J-  
260 shaped relationship between coffee and heart failure. Compared with no consumption, the  
261 strongest inverse association was seen for 4 cups/day and a potentially higher risk at higher  
262 levels of consumption. Results were not modified by sex or by baseline history of myocardial  
263 infarction or diabetes.<sup>43</sup> The inverse association between coffee and heart failure is  
264 somewhat expected because CHD is one of the main causes of heart failure and, as  
265 commented above, moderate coffee intake has also shown an inverse association with CHD.  
266 Lastly, since coffee intake produces a short-term increase in BP, it is of interest to assess the  
267 impact of coffee and CVD in hypertensive patients. A systematic review of 7 cohort studies  
268 found no evidence of an association between habitual coffee consumption and a higher risk  
269 of CVD in these patients.<sup>21</sup>

270 **4. Coffee consumption and all-cause mortality**

271 Among 41,736 men and 86,214 women with no history of CVD or cancer at baseline who  
272 were followed during 18 years and 24 years, respectively, we found in a previous study an  
273 inverse association between habitual coffee consumption and all-cause death.<sup>44</sup> This  
274 association, which was more evident in women than men, was mainly due to a moderately  
275 reduced risk for CVD mortality and was independent of caffeine intake. Coffee consumption  
276 was not linked to risk for cancer death after adjustment for potential confounders. Lastly,  
277 decaffeinated coffee consumption was associated with a small reduction in all-cause and  
278 CVD mortality.<sup>44</sup>

279 A subsequent large analysis of the National Institutes of Health-AARP Diet and Health Study,  
280 which included 229,119 men and 173,141 women aged 50-71 years and free of CVD and  
281 cancer at baseline, found a significant inverse association between coffee consumption and  
282 mortality.<sup>45</sup> The lowest risk was observed for those consuming 4-5 cups/day. Inverse  
283 associations were observed for deaths due to heart disease, respiratory disease, stroke,  
284 injuries and accidents, diabetes, and infections, but not for deaths due to cancer. Results  
285 were similar in subgroups, including persons who had never smoked and persons who  
286 reported very good-to-excellent health at baseline.<sup>45</sup>

287 Several subsequent meta-analyses of the literature<sup>46-48</sup> and pooling of individual data<sup>49</sup> have  
288 assessed the association between coffee and all-cause death. They reported a modest non-  
289 linear inverse association, which probably applies to both regular and decaffeinated coffee.

290 The most recent meta-analysis has included 31 studies comprising 1,610,543 individuals with  
291 183,991 cases of all-cause, 34,574 of CVD, and 40,991 of cancer deaths.<sup>13</sup> Analyses showed  
292 decreased all-cause and CVD mortality associated with coffee consumption in both smokers

293 and non-smokers. Among non-smokers, an increase of 1 cup/day of coffee yielded a linear  
294 decreased risk of death from all-causes (relative risk [RR] = 0.94) and from CVD (RR = 0.94).  
295 However, smoking modified the association between coffee and cancer. Whereas in  
296 smokers, the risk of cancer increased progressively with coffee consumption, non-smokers  
297 showed an inverse continuous association (RR = 0.98 per cup/day). The direct association  
298 between coffee intake and cancer risk in smokers was interpreted as a manifestation of  
299 confounding by smoking, whereby the protective effect of coffee was attenuated by the  
300 increased risk of cancer due to smoking.<sup>13</sup>

301 The EPIC and MEC studies have examined the association between coffee and mortality  
302 across countries and ethnic groups. The EPIC study, a large cohort of over 500,000  
303 individuals from 10 European countries with an average follow-up of 16 years, found an  
304 inverse relationship between coffee intake and all-cause or CVD mortality in men and  
305 women.<sup>50</sup> The findings were consistent across countries, which increases their  
306 generalizability because populations used different coffee preparation methods and had  
307 different drinking patterns. The MEC study followed more than 185,000 African Americans,  
308 Native Hawaiians, Japanese Americans, Latinos, and whites for an average of 16 years and  
309 also found a lower all-cause or CVD mortality associated with coffee drinking in all  
310 racial/ethnic groups.<sup>51</sup> This study substantially increases the generalizability of previous  
311 findings across the racial/ethnic spectrum.

312 Mendelian randomization studies have attempted to shed some light on whether the  
313 association between coffee and mortality is causal or not. While these investigations have  
314 confirmed that, observationally, coffee intake was associated with U-shaped lower CVD  
315 disease and all-cause mortality, genetically, caffeine intake was not associated with risk of

316 CVD or all-cause death.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, given that alleles representing intake of caffeine are  
317 associated with greater coffee consumption, that coffee is the main source of caffeine, and  
318 that results were similar after excluding tea and cola drinkers, these analyses do not support  
319 the hypothesis that the association is causal. However, they do not entirely negate the  
320 hypothesis because the genetic associations with coffee intake in this study were relatively  
321 small compared with observational differences in coffee intake and, thus, it had limited  
322 statistical power to rule out a causal association between coffee and mortality.<sup>52</sup> Additional  
323 research is clearly needed to establish causation in the association between coffee and  
324 mortality.

325 ***5. Coffee consumption and recurrent CVD and mortality in individuals who already***  
326 ***suffered a CVD***

327 The few studies conducted on patients with CVD have yielded somewhat inconsistent  
328 results. In a population-based case-control study, heavy coffee consumption was associated  
329 with higher risk of sudden cardiac death.<sup>53</sup> Another study, in patients hospitalized for acute  
330 myocardial infarction, found a strongly protective association between heavy coffee  
331 consumption and all-cause mortality after 90 days of follow-up, but not after 4 years of  
332 follow-up.<sup>54</sup> Also, cumulative consumption of nonfiltered coffee was not associated with the  
333 risk of a second CVD event in another 3-year follow-up study.<sup>55</sup> By contrast, filtered coffee  
334 consumption during the year preceding the coronary event has been linked to lower all-  
335 cause mortality in a 10-year prospective study of survivors of an acute myocardial  
336 infarction.<sup>56</sup> Finally, we examined the association between filtered caffeinated coffee  
337 consumption and the risk of all-cause and CVD death in 11,697 women with CVD followed  
338 during 24 years in the Nurses' Health Study. The main advantages of this study were the long



339 follow-up, the large size of the cohort, and the fact that coffee intake was assessed both  
340 before and after the CVD event every 4 years. We did not find an association between long-  
341 term filtered caffeinated coffee consumption and risk of all-cause or CVD death. Neither was  
342 shorter-term coffee consumption associated with mortality in these women.<sup>57</sup> Thus, with the  
343 exception of one case-control study, whose small sample size and retrospective design may  
344 limit the validity of the results, the available evidence suggests that in survivors of a CVD,  
345 coffee intake does not increase, and might even lower, the risk of a recurrent CVD event or  
346 death.<sup>58</sup>

347 We conclude that, in healthy people, habitual consumption of 3-5 cups of coffee/day is  
348 associated with a 15% reduction in the risk of CVD, and higher consumption has not been  
349 linked to elevated CVD risk. Also, usual intake of 1-5 cups/day is associated with lower risk of  
350 all-cause mortality. Finally, in people who have already suffered a CVD event, habitual  
351 consumption does not increase the risk of a recurrent CVD or death. Thus, moderate coffee  
352 intake can be part of a healthy diet for most people.<sup>59</sup>

353 However, among hypertensive patients, those with uncontrolled BP should avoid consuming  
354 large doses of caffeine. In those with well-controlled BP, coffee consumption is probably  
355 safe, but this hypothesis should be confirmed by further investigations.

356 Despite the substantial amount of evidence indicating that coffee consumption is safe, and  
357 even beneficial for cardiovascular health, if physicians are to offer sound medical advice on  
358 this subject, more research will be required in the following areas:

- 359 a) Better characterization of the effect of coffee in high risk populations, specifically,  
360 hypertensive patients with poorly controlled BP and patients with heart failure with and

361 without atrial fibrillation; this is a frequent comorbidity in heart failure, whose risk could  
362 be modified by caffeine.<sup>60-62</sup>

363 b) Given that most studies have been performed on filtered regular coffee, more research  
364 is needed on other types of coffee preparation (boiled-unfiltered, espresso, instant) and  
365 on decaffeinated coffee, though it seems that the associated CVD risk is similar to that  
366 for regular coffee.

367 c) The effect of coffee on patient-reported outcomes (e.g., quality of life in the general  
368 population or in patients with CHD or heart failure).<sup>63</sup>

369 d) The effect of genetic polymorphisms, particularly of the cytochrome P450 1A2 (CYP1A2)  
370 enzyme, on the pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics of caffeine, because those  
371 polymorphisms can contribute to can explain inter-individual variability in the amount of  
372 coffee consumed<sup>64</sup> as well as in their health effects.<sup>65,66</sup>

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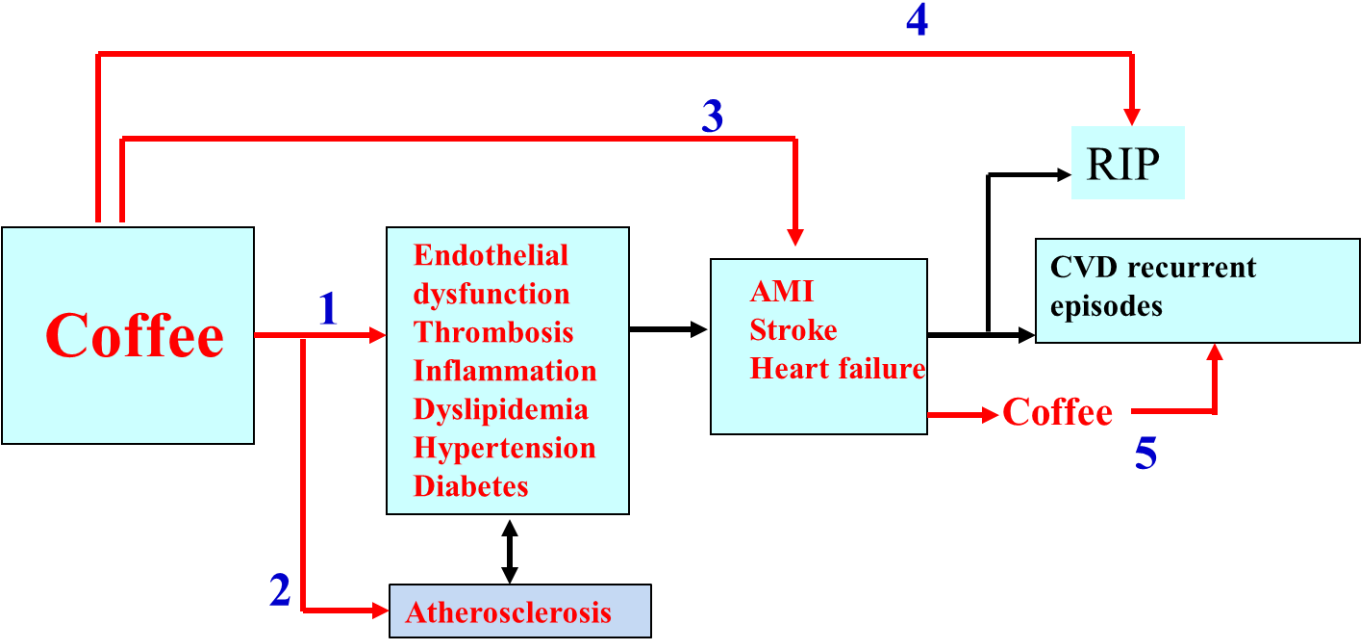
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Figure 1. Natural history of cardiovascular disease, including the potential targets for the effect of coffee consumption.



## Cardiovascular effects of coffee

