

Coffee May Be A Cure For Alzheimer's Disease

UK, Monday July 06, 2009

A few cups of coffee a day may stave off Alzheimer's disease and could even help to treat the condition, according to new research.

Mice who were fed coffee showed big signs of mental improvement

Scientists in Florida uncovered the evidence during tests on animals, and now hope to follow up their findings with trials on humans.

US neuroscientist Dr Gary Arendash, who led the research, said: "The new findings provide evidence that caffeine could be a viable 'treatment' for established Alzheimer's disease, and not simply a protective strategy.

"That's important because caffeine is a safe drug for most people. It easily enters the brain, and it appears to directly affect the disease process."

Patients with Alzheimer's disease have sticky clumps of abnormal protein in the brain called beta amyloid plaques.

Caffeine was given to mice which had been genetically engineered to develop dementia symptoms and researchers recorded a 50% reduction in levels of beta amyloid protein in their brains.

The creatures also developed better memories and quicker thinking.

The equivalent dose in humans would be 500 milligrams of caffeine a day, or just 5 cups of ordinary coffee or 14 cups of tea.

But people with high blood pressure or women who are pregnant should avoid too much caffeine.

Dr Huntington Potter, director of the **Florida Alzheimer's Disease Research Centre (ADRC)** in Tampa, where the studies were conducted, said: "Our goal is to obtain the funding needed to translate the therapeutic discoveries in mice into well-designed clinical trials."

The new research was reported in two studies published online in the Journal of Alzheimer's Disease.

Neil Hunt, chief executive of the **Alzheimer's Society**, said: "This research in mice suggests that coffee may actually reverse some element of memory impairment."

(Alzheimer's disease, first described by the German neurologist Alois Alzheimer, is a physical disease affecting the brain. During the course of the disease, 'plaques' and 'tangles' develop in the structure of the brain, leading to the death of brain cells. People with Alzheimer's also have a shortage of some important chemicals in their brains. These chemicals are involved with the transmission of messages within the brain. Alzheimer's is a progressive disease, which means that gradually, over time, more parts of the brain are damaged. As this happens, the symptoms become more severe.)

Name: _____

1. When was this article published?	
2. What is Alzheimers's disease?	
3. Which animals were used in the research?	
4. How can caffeine help Alzheimer's patients?	
5. What else improved when caffeine was used in the experiment?	
6. Are there side-effects when caffeine is used?	
7. What is meant by a "progressive disease"?	
8. How much coffee should we drink to "avoid" getting Alzheimer's?	
9. Where was the research conducted?	
10. What must still be done to prove beyond doubt that this really works?	

