

Beneficial Effects of Caffeinated Coffee and Effects of Withdrawal

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SUMMARY

There is now a large literature on the beneficial effects of caffeinated coffee on performance and mood. Recent claims have been made that the effects of caffeine do not reflect a benefit but merely the removal of negative effects of caffeine withdrawal. If such claims are true then this undermines the substantial literature on the behavioural benefits of consuming caffeinated coffee. It is essential, therefore, to provide a systematic account of this issue. Those who do not consume caffeinated products cannot have caffeine withdrawal. Comparison of non-consumers with regular consumers who have had caffeine withdrawn provides information on whether withdrawal does influence mood and performance. Similarly, if effects of caffeine can be demonstrated in this group then this casts serious doubts about the caffeine withdrawal explanation of the behavioural effects of caffeine. Three studies were conducted to examine these issues. Overall, results from these large-scale studies showed no evidence of negative effects of caffeine withdrawal on mood and performance. They also show improved mood and performance in both non-consumers, who by definition are not withdrawn, and withdrawn consumers.