

Caffeine May Help Prevent Cataracts

Your morning cup of coffee may do more than help you keep your eyes open. It may protect them as well. Tea and coffee alkaloids may have an anti-cataract effect on the lens of the eye. Exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays generates compounds called free radicals that can have harmful effects on our bodies. UV exposure is a known factor in cataract formation. Because caffeine inhibits free radicals, researchers at the University of Maryland in Baltimore wanted to test its effect on cataract formation. They exposed mouse lenses to UV light and added caffeine to one group of lenses. Their conclusion: caffeine apparently helps the lens remain healthy and counteracts cataract-causing UV effects. While the results require further testing, the researchers hope one day to develop eye drops containing caffeine's lens-protective alkaloids. In the meantime, while savoring your favorite cup of coffee or tea, enjoy the thought that you might be doing your eyes a favor.

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