

Good for you, bad for you, causes cancer, cures it? No matter what studies show about coffee, it hasn't stopped us from drinking it by the gallon.



In moderation, coffee seems pretty harmless; but there's something bigger to worry about in your cup of joe than the wrong type of milk: acrylamide.

Why does this matter?

According to the [National Cancer Institute](#), "Acrylamide is a chemical used primarily as a building block in making polyacrylamide and acrylamide copolymers [which] are used in many industrial processes, such as the production of paper, dyes, and plastics."

Food and cigarette smoke are the main sources of acrylamide exposure, which [The National Toxicology Program](#) and the [International Agency for Research on Cancer](#) consider a

“probable human carcinogen” based on studies in lab animals.



“Acrylamide is formed when carbohydrate-containing substances are roasted or otherwise heated to high temperatures,” [HealWithFood.org](https://www.healwithfood.org) explains. Therefore coffee, due to its scalding preparation demands, becomes a major player in the dialogue surrounding the worrisome chemical. Luckily, [the site offers multiple ways](https://www.healwithfood.org) you can reduce your acrylamide intake. Among them are:

Take your time to brew your java

“If you want to reduce the amount of carcinogenic substances in your daily cup of coffee, brewing your own java may really pay off. Although instant coffee may seem

attractive as it can save you time and effort, it has been reported to contain more acrylamide than the brewed version.”

Be aware of differences between brands

“There also seems to be significant differences between brands when it comes to acrylamide levels in coffee. Based on data provided by the FDA, Folgers and Taster’s Choice had the highest levels on average—both in their instant and non-instant products. Yuban Coffee (a brand of Kraft Foods) stood out by having an exceptionally low acrylamide content in this analysis. It is worth noting, however, that the FDA only analyzed a limited number of samples and that there could be significant lot-to-lot variation.”

Drink dark roast

“According to an analysis based on the FDA data, dark-roasted beans seem to contain lower levels of acrylamide. This (perhaps surprising) observation is confirmed by a joint-study conducted by the European Commission and Nestlé Product Technology. The researchers responsible for the study found that light-roasted coffee beans tend to contain relatively higher amounts of acrylamide than dark-roasted beans. Why? According to research, acrylamide is formed at the beginning of the coffee bean roasting cycle and it declines steeply toward the end of the process due to higher rates of elimination.”

HealWithFood.org

Curious about how acrylamide levels are measured in coffee? It’s as easy as chromatography.

Employing a method utilizing [Simplified Liquid Extraction \(SLE\)](#) and [HPLC](#), scientists can quantify the levels of acrylamide—holding coffee roasters accountable for reducing the risk of harmful toxins in every batch, while demonstrating the processes they use to improve our java’s quality. [View the complete Acrylamide Extraction and Quantification Method here.](#)

How does your coffee rate? Check this chart to find out:

Chart: Average acrylamide levels in selected coffees (in parts per billion, or ppb)

Brand	Not instant	Instant	Dark Roast	Regular Roast	Brewed
Folgers	314	458	237	346	10
Maxwell House	215	218	201	223	6
Chock full o’Nuts	201	NA	191	212	NA
Starbucks	149	NA	132	158	9
Hills Bros	135	NA	NA	135	NA
Yuban	51	NA	NA	51	NA
Café Bustelo	142	NA	138	NA	6
Medaglia D’Oro	168	NA	164	NA	6
Taster’s Choice	272	353	NA	NA	7
Nescafé	NA	471	NA	NA	6
7-Eleven	NA	NA	NA	NA	6

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Related resources:

- [Chlorogenic Acids from Green Coffee by HPLC-UV](#)
- [iMethod™ Food – Quantification of acrylamide in food by LC/MS/MS](#)
- [EPA Method 8316 – acrylamide, acrylonitrile, and acrolein](#)
- [Green coffee on Kinetex 2.6u EVO C18 100×2.1mm @ 0.4mL/min](#)
- [Caffeine in ground coffee beans on Kinetex 2.6µm C18 100 x 4.6mm ID](#)
- [Chlorogenic acid in brewed black coffee using Kinetex 5u C18 100×4.6mm](#)