



AskDoctor Dr Karuhanga



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Is taking coffee at night causing my heart to race?

I am a Senior Four student, and whenever I drink coffee to study at night, my heart starts to race. Will I develop high blood pressure in the future?
Silver Maitum

Dear Silver,

A person typically does not feel their heart pumping. However, if you experience your heart racing or pounding (known as palpitations), this may occur after physical exercise, during pregnancy, in the presence of a fever, or as a result of stress and anxiety.

Other potential causes include low blood levels (anaemia), low blood sugar, heart disease, thyroid disorders, and certain lifestyle factors, such as consuming excessive amounts of caffeine or alcohol, as well as taking medications for common colds or high blood pressure.

While palpitations can occur in individuals with high blood pressure, experiencing them after drinking coffee does not necessarily mean you will develop high blood pressure now or in the future. Coffee, along with concentrated tea, soda,



energy drinks, and most types of chocolate, contains caffeine, which can trigger palpitations.

Caffeine may also lead to sleeplessness (which is why students often use it to stay awake while studying), as well as restlessness or irritability, heartburn, dizziness or trembling, urinary issues, and headaches, among other side effects. When consumed in large quantities, these effects may worsen.

Although caffeine is often feared for potentially causing

high blood pressure, it may only raise blood pressure temporarily, with the effect subsiding sooner than expected.

Many individuals find that their palpitations decrease when they reduce their coffee consumption over time.

It is essential to visit your doctor to explore other possible causes of palpitations that caffeine might be highlighting. In the meantime, please consider reducing your coffee intake to minimise negative effects, including palpitations.