New Study Explains How and Why Coffee Reduces Stress

**It's all about how caffeine affects brain chemistry**

Caffeine - or 1,3,7-Trimethylpurine-2,6-dione, if you prefer - is a stimulant that acts on the central nervous system. Hence the fact that it is classified as a psychoactive drug.

What's interesting is that, although guys and gals usually drink coffee to jump-start their cognitive functions bright and early in the morning and perk up their day, scientific evidence shows that caffeine also works to alleviate stress.

Thus, scientists say that it often happens that people feel calmer after having consumed this psychoactive drug. To better understand how and why this happens, an international team of researchers carried out a series of experiments on mice.

In a paper published earlier this week in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, the researchers propose an explanation for how and why coffee reduces stress.

**It all boils down to brain chemistry**

It's been theorized that caffeine has no intrinsic calming effects and that the only reason people feel less stressed once they drink a cup of coffee is that sitting and enjoying this brew counts as a break from one's daily routine.

Still, the international team of scientists found that caffeine affects the brain at a molecular level. Specifically, this stimulant of the central nervous system appears to toy with the levels of so-called adenosine A2A receptors in the brain, Medical Express informs.

In doing so, caffeine has a calming effect. In the case of the lab rodents the researchers experimented on, it helped them have an easier time coping with stressful conditions such as lack of food and water and cramped living spaces.

“What caffeine is doing is not making the system work better; what caffeine is doing is avoiding the system going into the wrong way of working,” specialist Rodrigo Cunha of Portugal's University of Coimbra explained in an interview.
Admittedly, mouse brains aren't quite the same as human brains. Still, the scientists behind this study suspect that their findings also hold true in the case of people. Further, they theorize that coffee might even help prevent depression, even memory loss.