



Get Stimulated About Caffeine

What Is Caffeine?

Caffeine is one of the world's most commonly used drugs. It is a bitter, naturally occurring substance found in coffee and cocoa beans, tea leaves, kola nuts, and other plants. It can be ingested when consuming coffee, tea, soft drinks, or chocolate. Significant amounts of caffeine are also found in some over-the-counter medications, and dietary supplements. Just one aspirin substitute can have as much caffeine as one cup of instant coffee!

Caffeine elicits the above response because it is a central nervous system stimulant. Depending on the amount consumed and an individual's tolerance, caffeine can produce the following stimulant effects:

- increased heart and breathing rates
- enhanced physical performance
- heightened alertness and wakefulness
- increased urine production
- elevated blood pressure level
- increased production of acid by the stomach

Within 30-60 minutes of drinking a cup of coffee, caffeine reaches peak concentrations in the bloodstream. And, it typically takes 4-6 hours for its effects to wear off.

Is Caffeine Addictive?

Although caffeine is sometimes characterized as "addictive," its effects do not even remotely compare to the serious physical and social consequences of highly-addictive drugs like cocaine and heroin. Still, caffeine can be habit-forming. Tolerance does develop to some of its stimulant effects, and withdrawal symptoms do occur. When regular caffeine consumption is abruptly stopped, some people experience headaches, fatigue, and irritability. These effects usually are temporary, lasting for a few days. They often can be avoided if caffeine cessation is gradual.

(Continued)



www.snac.ucla.edu



What Are the Health Risks Associated With Caffeine?

Despite earlier concerns, there is no evidence that caffeine increases the risk of heart disease or cancer. During pregnancy, caffeine should be limited to less than 300 mg per day (about 3 cups of coffee). In pregnant women, large amounts of caffeine may increase the risk of miscarriage or delivering an underweight baby. In addition, caffeine can worsen symptoms of gastric reflux (i.e., heartburn), cause a temporary elevation of blood pressure, leach small amounts of calcium from bone, and increase fluid loss due to its diuretic effect.

Although it is generally safe, excessive doses of caffeine can produce many undesirable short-term effects such as irritability, anxiety, trembling, frequent urination, and insomnia.

Moderation and common sense are the keys for consuming caffeine. A moderate amount of caffeine is considered to be no more than 300 mg. per day, which is equal to about three 8 oz. cups of coffee.

Keep the following tips in mind with regard to caffeine:

- Be aware of hidden caffeine. Many over-the-counter medicines, weight control pills, herbal supplements, and pain relievers contain substantial quantities of caffeine. Chocolate, soda, and coffee-flavored yogurt and ice cream also contain caffeine.
- Avoid caffeine consumption during the evening. It may interfere with sleep patterns and cause insomnia.
- Add at least two tablespoons of 1% or fat-free milk to each cup of coffee you drink to replace the lost calcium and maintain strong bones.
- Drink plenty of water and other non-caffeinated beverages to maintain optimal hydration.
- Remember that caffeine cannot sober up an individual intoxicated from alcohol.

Need more information about caffeine?

Please visit www.snac.ucla.edu.



Get Stimulated About Caffeine

SOME CAFFEINE BASICS

Caffeine is one of the world's most widely-used drugs. It is a stimulant to the central nervous system and is found in coffee beans, tea leaves, cocoa beans, and kola nuts. In addition to soft drinks, coffee, and tea, caffeine is found in chocolate and coffee-flavored yogurt and ice cream. Caffeine is also present in many over-the-counter drugs and dietary supplements, including headache and cold remedies and weight control aids.

What are Possible Effects of Excessive Caffeine Consumption?

While caffeine in moderation can clearly heighten mental and physical performance, excessive doses can overstimulate the nerves and produce many undesirable effects such as insomnia, anxiety, irritability, trembling, dizziness, nervousness, stomach discomfort, diarrhea, frequent urination, and facial flushing. As a result, a caffeine boost taken to enhance studying may actually interfere with concentration and increase stress.

How Much Caffeine Could Cause These Undesirable Symptoms?

The amount needed to trigger adverse effects depends on how sensitive you are to the drug as well as how much you regularly consume. Some individuals who rarely use caffeine experience symptoms after a single cup of coffee. Even habitual users can become jumpy if they consume more than usual.

Can I Become Dependent Upon Caffeine?

Yes! Individuals dependent on the stimulatory effects of this drug may experience irritability, nausea, vomiting, headaches, fatigue, and other withdrawal symptoms if caffeine consumption is abruptly decreased or eliminated. These effects usually last a few days and can often be avoided if caffeine intake is gradually decreased over a week or so.

What Are My Alternatives?

When studying for midterms, finals, or writing a paper, give yourself a break by exercising or performing a stress-reduction technique. Practice progressive muscle relaxation or guided imagery instead of reaching for another cup of coffee. Not only will it relax you, but you'll probably be able to concentrate better.

Make informed choices about products containing caffeine, and practice moderation to reduce your caffeine intake. The list of products and their caffeine content found on the reverse side of this sheet will assist you in making these choices.

(Continued)





CAFFEINE CONTENT OF VARIOUS PRODUCTS

PRODUCT	CAFFEINE CONTENT (mg.)	
	<u>Typical</u>	<u>Range</u>
Coffee (8 oz. cup, unless otherwise indicated)		
Coffee, drip method	85	65-120
Coffee, Instant	75	60-80
Flavored Coffee	50	25-75
Coffee, brewed or instant, decaffeinated	3	2-4
Café Latte, Cappuccino, or Café Mocha	35	30-50
Espresso (1 oz.)	40	30-50
Tea (8 oz. cup)		
Black	50	20-110
Green	20	8-36
White	15	n/a
Instant Tea	28	24-31
Iced Tea	25	9-50
Yerba Mate	30	15-24
Chocolate		
Baker's Chocolate (1 oz.)	26	26
Dark or Semi-sweet Chocolate (1 oz.)	20	5-35
Milk Chocolate (1 oz.)	6	1-15
Hot Cocoa (8 oz.)	6	3-32
Chocolate Milk (8 oz.)	5	2-7
Chocolate-flavored Syrup (1 oz.)	4	4
Soft Drinks (12 oz. can)		
Red Bull (8.3 oz. can)	80	n/a
Water, caffeine-enhanced	70	40-90
Coca-Cola/Pepsi	34*	34-38*
Diet Coke/Diet Pepsi	36*	36-45*
Mountain Dew	55	n/a
Barq's Root Beer	22.5	n/a
7-Up/Sprite	0	n/a
Drugs and Medications (one dosage of product)		
Weight control agent	200	200-280
Anti-drowsiness agent	200	100-200
Excedrin	65	n/a
Anacin	32	n/a
Menstrual pain relief medication	32	n/a
Aspirin compound	64	n/a
Multi-symptom cold medication	32	32-34

*Check the ingredient list to see if a soft drink you are considering contains caffeine.