

The Truth About Caffeine

More Than a Quick Pick-Up

Americans drink five hundred million cups of coffee a day, and consume more coffee than any other country in the world. Four out of five Americans have two to four cups of coffee every day, while twenty-five percent qualify as true caffeine addicts by drinking more than five cups in a 24 hour period. Coffee, of course, isn't the only source of caffeine. Caffeine also occurs naturally in non-herbal teas, cocoa, and chocolate. It is also an additive in certain kinds of aspirin, cold remedies, diet aids, and colas.



Cutting down on caffeine makes sense for a number of reasons, but perhaps the most important reason is that caffeine is medically classified as a poison. Around ten grams of caffeine, the amount found in seventy to one hundred cups of coffee, can be fatal.

Side Effects of Caffeine

Caffeine has some beneficial effects. It stimulates the central nervous system to help keep people alert and increase their stamina. It can relieve certain types of headaches by constricting blood vessels in the brain and can reduce muscle tension by increasing blood flow to the muscle cells.

Adverse effects can include inability to fall asleep, interrupted wakeful sleep, mood changes (anxiety, depression, and irritability), heartburn, upset stomach, increased headaches, and irregular heartbeats. Caffeine-sensitive individuals or occasional caffeine consumers find these effects to be more dramatic. Heavy coffee drinkers often become desensitized to some of the adverse effects. For them, caffeine reduction often causes headaches and withdrawal symptoms.

Excessive caffeine is not recommended for women trying to become pregnant, or



pregnant or breastfeeding women, or individuals with an active ulcer. Some women with fibrocystic breast disease have reduced symptoms of pain and tenderness after avoiding caffeine. Moderation or abstinence for these individuals is the sensible choice.

Cardiac disturbances, which include irregular heartbeats and temporarily increased blood pressure, have been documented with caffeine consumption. Whether caffeine can actually cause heart disease and/or heart attack is a hotly debated issue with no conclusive evidence. The scare that coffee consumption can cause pancreatic cancer has been disproved after further research.

Caffeine has been found to decrease the body's absorption of iron and to some extent calcium. For best absorption of these nutrients, caffeine should not be consumed with high iron and calcium food sources.

Limited Caffeine

- ✓ Taper of your need for caffeine by staying busy.
- ✓ Lower the brewing time to reduce the amount of caffeine released.
- ✓ Try coffee substitutes like Postum, Kava, Pero, Cafix, Duran, amd Roastaroma, or decaffeinated coffee.
- ✓ For chocolate lovers, avoid dark chocolate because it contains more caffeine than milk chocolate.
- ✓ Drink "light" sodas instead of "dark" sodas. (Sprite instead of Coca Cola)

