

Caffeine

Caffeine is the most widely used drug in the world. Drinks such as coffee, tea, and many soft drinks contain caffeine. It is also found in medications for staying awake, dieting, treating colds, allergies, migraines and muscle tension.

Americans consume an average of 200 milligrams of caffeine a day. This is equivalent to 2 cups of coffee, 3-4 cans of soda, or 4 cups of tea. Many students rely on it to wake up, stay alert during class, and keep them awake for late night studying.

Here are just a few examples of drinks that contain caffeine:

Type of drink	Size of drink (fluid ounces & milliliters)	Caffeine Amt. (mg)
Espresso	1 oz. (30 mL)	40-75 mg
Generic brewed coffee	8 oz. (240 mL)	95-200 mg
Starbucks Mocha Frappuccino	16 oz. (480 mL)	110 mg
Starbucks Café Latte	16 oz. (480 mL)	150 mg
Starbucks Pike Place brewed coffee	16 oz. (480 mL)	330 mg
Black tea	8 oz. (240 mL)	14-61 mg
Green tea	8 oz. (240 mL)	24-40 mg
AriZona Iced Tea, lemon-flavored	8 oz. (240 mL)	11 mg
Coca-Cola Classic	12 oz. (355 mL)	30-35 mg
Diet Coke	12 oz. (355 mL)	38-47 mg
5-Hour Energy	2 oz. (60 mL)	207 mg
Red Bull	8.4 oz (250 mL)	76-80 mg

*Adapted from Pediatrics, 2011; USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 23, 2010; Food and Drug Administration, 2011; Vroom Foods, Inc., 2011

What does caffeine do to your body?

Caffeine stimulates the central nervous system, this can make you more alert and give you a boost of energy. Too much caffeine can make you restless, anxious, and irritable. It may also keep you from sleeping well, cause headaches, or abnormal heart rhythms.

Caffeine can be habit-forming. Some regular users who give it up may experience withdrawal symptoms 12-16 hours after the last dose. Some of these symptoms may include:

- Drowsiness
- Headaches
- Lethargy
- Irritability
- Disinterest in work
- Depression
- Occasional nausea and vomiting

Does caffeine improve performance?

Caffeine may not improve performance of complex tasks; it may even interfere with work or study-related tasks. In moderate doses (200 mg or more, depending on body weight and physical condition) it can produce:

- Trembling
- Nervousness
- Chronic muscle tension
- Irritability
- Throbbing headaches
- Disorientation
- Sluggishness
- Depression
- Insomnia - otherwise known as "coffee nerves"

While it may keep you awake for some tasks, caffeine (and other stimulants such as amphetamines or "speed") will not make up for declining performance caused by lack of rest and exhaustion. You may stay awake for an "all-nighter," but your memory may be less efficient. In addition, "coffee nerves" can cause behaviors that may add tension to interpersonal interactions.

What if I want more energy?

Morning or afternoon slumps - which affect everyone in some form - are often used as rationale for drinking caffeinated beverages. But there are caffeine-free antidotes to sluggishness and mental lethargy. Here are a few suggestions:

Do

- Eat Breakfast! Breakfast provides the energy you need to keep you going throughout the day. Consuming complex carbohydrates with more than 3g of fiber/serving (whole grain breads, cereals, oatmeal), lean protein sources (peanut butter, egg whites, lowfat milk/soymilk, lowfat cottage cheese), and fruit will get you off to a great start!
- Get a good night's rest to help stay alert and feel good.
- Try a little physical activity - a brisk 10-minute walk around the block or around campus.
- Eat regular meals to provide a consistent energy source. These should include a good source of protein such as chicken, turkey or fish and/or low-fat dairy products like yogurt. Also, stock up on 'trail mix' or other snacks that contain nuts, raisins, etc., which are abundant sources of protein.
- Take a mid-day nap. A short 20-minute nap may re-energize you to get you through the rest of the day's activities.

DON'T

- Eat large meals or foods high in refined carbohydrates (sugar); they can be depressants.
- Alcohol intensifies fatigue and sleepiness and slows down your nervous system.
- Fatty foods can also make you sluggish.

How can I quit the caffeine habit?

Reduce your intake gradually to avoid tension or withdrawal headaches, coffee nerves, and drowsiness. Cut back your regular consumption by a cup (or glass) or two a day until the craving is gone and until you quit for good. Decaffeinated coffee or other drinks with less or no caffeine are good alternatives.

Of course it's easier not to get into the habit of using caffeine in the morning, at work/study breaks, or after meals, than it is to break those habits. If you pay attention to how you use caffeine, you can better control how it may be affecting you. To get a feel for how much caffeine you consume, try the following suggestions:

- Keep a log to determine how much caffeine you consume daily.
- Remember to count non-prescription medications as they may have caffeine also. Then try decreasing your caffeine intake and record your feelings and physical reactions throughout the day.
- Limit your caffeine intake to 2 to 4 cups or glasses daily (less than 200 mg/per day).
- Substitute coffee and teas with herbal teas, hot cider, or hot water with lemon.

How can I quit...(Continued on page 3)

How can I quit...(Continued from page 2)

- Try another activity to give you the same boost-- running, walking, swimming, bike riding, yoga, or meditation.
- Eat regular small meals to keep your energy level consistent (3 meals and 2-3 snacks) Aim to eat a meal or snack every 3-4 hours throughout each day.
- If your coffee drinking is associated with smoking cigarettes, quitting one habit will usually help you to quit the other. This will break the chain of events.
- Ask people at home or work to decrease their caffeine intake along with you.
- Don't use caffeine while taking antidepressant drugs (it may alter the effectiveness) or high blood pressure medications (it may raise your blood pressure).
- Don't use caffeine to "sober up" after drinking alcohol. It does not reverse the intoxicating effects of alcohol or subside the effects of a hangover. In fact, this can have a dehydrating effect. Instead choose water.

For More Information:

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