

ADDICTION/DEPENDENCE

The word "addiction" is an old word meaning simply to be devoted or habituated to a practice. People who say they are "addicted" to caffeine tend to use the term loosely, like saying they are "addicted" to chocolate, running, working or television.

According to the World Health Organization, "There is no evidence whatsoever that caffeine use has even remotely comparable physical and social consequences which are associated with serious drugs of abuse." Some sensitive individuals may experience mild, temporary effects, including headache, restlessness and irritability when their daily intake is quickly and substantially altered. Medical experts have long agreed that any discomfort caused by abruptly stopping consumption of caffeine can be avoided by progressively decreasing intake over a few days.

BREAST DISEASE

A worldwide investigation of 100,000 deaths due to breast cancer found no relationship between caffeine intake and the development of this disease. Research has also shown that caffeine intake is not related to the development of fibrocystic breast disease (FBD), a condition with benign fibrous lumps in the breast, although caffeine is sometimes thought to aggravate this condition. Both the American Medical Association's Council on Scientific Affairs and the National Cancer Institute published reports stating there is not an association between caffeine intake and the incidence of FBD.

OSTEOPOROSIS

Research has shown that caffeine intake is not a significant risk factor for osteoporosis, particularly in women who consume adequate calcium. A 1994 NIH advisory panel concluded that caffeine has not been found to affect calcium absorption or excretion significantly. Several studies conducted to date show no link between moderate caffeine consumption and bone density and mineral content in women who consume some calcium in their diet.

CAFFEINE QUICK FACTS:

- **Caffeine is a naturally occurring substance found in the leaves, seeds or fruits of more than 60 plants.**
- **Coffee and cocoa beans, kola nuts and tea leaves are used to make beverages such as coffee, tea, cola drinks, and chocolate.**
- **Caffeine is used as a flavor in a variety of beverages.**
- **Caffeine will not help "sober up" someone who has consumed too much alcohol.**

CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE

A report from the National Research Council on Diet and Health stated, "evidence linking coffee consumption to the risk of coronary heart disease...is weak and inconsistent."

A 1989 report from the well-respected Framingham Heart Study examined all potential links between caffeine intake and cardiovascular disease, and found no harmful effects from drinking coffee. A later Harvard University study confirmed this report, concluding that caffeine intake does not "appreciably increase the risk of coronary heart disease or stroke."

Caffeine does not cause chronic hypertension or any persistent increase in blood pressure. Some individuals sensitive to caffeine may experience a short-lived rise in blood pressure, usually not lasting more than several hours. Studies show any rise in blood pressure is modest and less than that normally experienced when climbing stairs.

However, individuals with high blood pressure should consult their physician about caffeine intake.

Other resources available from the IFIC Foundation:
Caffeine and Women's Health
Healthy Eating During Pregnancy
IFIC Review:
Caffeine and Health - Clarifying the Controversies

Everything You Need to Know About...

Caffeine!



This health education material has been reviewed favorably by the American Academy of Family Physicians Foundation

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Whether waking up to the aroma of freshly brewed coffee, enjoying lunch with a refreshingly cold soft drink or relaxing in the evening with a cup of tea, these daily pleasures often have a common ingredient – *caffeine*.

People have enjoyed foods and beverages containing caffeine for thousands of years. It is one of the most well-studied ingredients in the food supply. Even so, controversy and misperceptions about this food component continue.

HISTORICAL NOTES

- As long ago as 2737 B.C., Chinese Emperor Shen Nung was boiling drinking water when the leaves of a nearby bush fell into the pot, creating a wonderful smelling drink and the first pot of tea.
- Coffee originated in Africa around 575 A.D., where beans were used as money and consumed as food.
- Eleventh century Arabians were known to have coffee beverages.
- While exploring the New World, Spanish conquistadors were treated to a chocolate drink by Aztec Emperor Montezuma in 1519.
- The world's first caffeinated soft drinks were created in the 1880's.

CAFFEINE AND HEALTH

During the past two decades, extensive research has been conducted on the health aspects of caffeine consumption.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) classified caffeine as Generally Recognized As Safe (GRAS) in 1958. A more recent review “found no evidence to show that the use of caffeine in carbonated beverages would render these products injurious to health.”

The American Medical Association (AMA) has a similar position on caffeine’s safety, stating that “Moderate tea or coffee drinkers probably need have no concern for their health relative to their caffeine consumption provided other lifestyle habits (diet, alcohol consumption) are moderate, as well.”

Most experts agree that moderation and common sense are the keys for consuming caffeine-containing foods and beverages. Moderate caffeine consumption is considered to be about 300 mg. which is equal to 3 cups of coffee, but this depends on the individual and can vary from one to several beverages. Consumers with certain health problems may wish to consult with their physician or health care provider about caffeine consumption.

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The American Medical Association

SENSITIVITY

People differ greatly in their sensitivity to caffeine; some individuals can drink several cups of coffee, tea or soft drinks within an hour and notice no effects, whereas others may feel stimulating effects after one serving. Caffeine does not accumulate in the bloodstream or body and is normally excreted within several hours following consumption.

Caffeine may increase alertness in tired individuals and enhance performance of certain tasks. Many people find caffeinated beverages can help them stay alert when they work or study. Individual sensitivity and frequency of consumption determine the effect of caffeine on sleep.

National Institutes of Health (NIH) research indicates there is no difference in the way children and adults handle caffeine. These studies have shown that caffeine-containing foods and beverages do not have an effect on hyperactivity or the attention span of children.

Parents should use common sense in deciding how much caffeine-containing foods or beverages they give their children, as with many foods.

PREGNANCY

The FDA has stated that caffeine does not adversely affect reproduction in humans, although the agency continues to advise pregnant women to consume caffeine in moderation.

Three major studies involving more than 15,000 women found no birth defects associated with caffeine consumption even among the heaviest coffee drinkers. Similarly, other human studies continue to support the conclusion that moderate consumption of caffeine does not predispose expectant mothers to spontaneous abortion or preterm delivery, nor the fetus to low birth weight.

Some studies suggest that high levels of caffeine intake may delay time to conception, but these findings are inconclusive and often inconsistent when other lifestyle variables are considered. Research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Harvard Medical School and the University of California at Berkeley show that moderate caffeine consumption does not reduce a woman’s chance of becoming pregnant.

WHAT PRODUCTS CONTAIN CAFFEINE AND HOW MUCH?

Item	Milligrams of Caffeine	
	Typical	Range
Coffee (6-oz. cup)		
Brewed, drip method	100	60-180
Instant	65	30-120
Decaffeinated	3	1-5
Teas (6-oz. cup)		
Brewed, major U.S. brands	40	20-90
Brewed, imported brands	60	25-110
Instant	28	24-31
Iced (8-oz. glass)	25	9-50
Some soft drinks (8 oz.)	24	20-40
Cocoa beverage (8 oz.)	6	3-32
Chocolate milk beverage (8 oz.)	5	2-7
Milk chocolate (1 oz.)	6	1-15
Dark chocolate, semi-sweet (1 oz.)	20	5-35
Baker’s chocolate (1 oz.)	26	26
Chocolate-flavored syrup (1 oz.)	4	4

CANCER

A 1986 study of 16,600 individuals published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* found no relationship between coffee consumption and cancer risk. The most recent review by the International Agency for Research on Cancer also concluded that data do not support a link between caffeine consumption and cancer in humans.

According to the American Cancer Society, “Available information does not suggest a recommendation against the moderate use of coffee. There is no indication that caffeine, a natural component of both coffee and tea, is a risk factor in human cancer.”