

HOW TO CUT DOWN ON CAFFEINE

& STILL ENJOY YOUR COFFEE!



By The American Institute of Health Care Professionals, Inc.

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Introduction: When & Why to Cut Down on Caffeine

Too much of a good thing can be a bad thing. This is the case with many of the foods and drinks that are currently in your diet. For example, drinking a moderate amount of coffee regularly delivers the following benefits.

- 1 cup of coffee has 11% of the daily required amount of vitamin B12 your body needs. You also get 6% of vitamin B5, 3% of potassium and manganese and 2% of the recommended daily allowance of vitamin B3 and magnesium.
- There are 6 anti-aging, cancer-fighting, inflammation-reducing antioxidants in coffee beans.
- Caffeine is very efficient as a fat-burner. Coffee beans not only have high levels of caffeine, but they also get your body producing epinephrine, which signals your body to release stored fat.
- Caffeine helps suppress your appetite. This means you feel full longer after eating, and can help you lose weight and maintain a healthy body weight.
- One study reported in the New York Times shows that drinking a cup of coffee before exercising or working out increases the efficiency of your performance.
- The Journal of Pain tells us that drinking 16 ounces of coffee can lessen muscle pain and fatigue by up to 40% following stressful physical activity or exercise.
- Drinking coffee reduces your risk of developing type 2 diabetes by as much as 50%, according to the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.
- Coffee supports the liver, prevents cavities, enhances your mood, benefits the heart and protects against at least 8 different types of cancer.

All of that good news probably makes you want to go out and get a cup of coffee right now. However, as with everything you put into your body, there are healthy and unhealthy amounts of caffeine. When you get too much caffeine for your system, the following problems can develop.

- Some studies show that caffeine reduces the fertility in women.
- Both men and women that drink at least 2 caffeinated drinks every day prior to conception show increased incidence rates of miscarriage.
- If you are diabetic, caffeine can raise your blood sugar level.
- In rare cases a caffeine overdose may occur, leading to serious health problems which include death.
- Caffeine has been linked to incontinence and insomnia.
- In some people, caffeine causes indigestion.
- Caffeine has been known to raise blood pressure, increase the risk of heart attacks among young adults, promotes gout flare-ups, and worsens menopause symptoms.
- Several studies show that a regular consumption of high levels of caffeine can lead to heart problems which include stroke and heart attack.

As you can see, caffeine can be good or bad. It all depends on how much you get, and how your individual and unique system responds to caffeine. They say that what is good for the goose is good for the gander, but that is not the case with caffeine. You may respond to drinking coffee in a way that is entirely different from someone else.

It should be noted that caffeine is not required by the human body. While it does offer several benefits, boosting performance in a number of ways and physiological processes, you don't need any caffeine to be healthy, strong, alert and mentally sharp. Also, the dangers of too much caffeine are very real and very serious. This begs the question ...

...How Much Caffeine Should You Be Drinking?

So, how much is too much caffeine? One study directed and reported by the Mayo Clinic shows that male adults who drink more than 4 cups of coffee (each cup equaling 8 ounces) most every day increased their chances of dying from any cause by 21%. Those same men who drank more than 4 cups of coffee on a regular basis also tended to be physically inactive and smoke as well.

If you have hypertension, another name for high blood pressure, the American Journal of Hypertension stresses moderation is the key with caffeine. The Mayo Clinic agrees with that assessment. Test subjects with hypertension who consumed between 160 and 250 mg of caffeine (1.5 to 2 cups) showed blood pressure which was substantially elevated for anywhere from 2 to 3 hours after getting the caffeine into their body. This was especially the case for those that didn't regularly consume caffeine.

In a presentation given to the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) in 2015, cardiologist Lucio Mos revealed the findings of a 12-year study on caffeine consumption in men and women between the ages of 18 and 45. The research reported data gathered from 200 volunteers, and the results deserve attention if you drink coffee or otherwise consume a lot of caffeine. It was found that heavy coffee drinkers (4 cups per day or more) were 400% more likely to suffer from a stroke, heart attack or other cardiovascular event than those who drank no coffee. Moderate coffee consumption (3 or more daily cups) increased the risk by 300%.



The amount of caffeine women can safely ingest was observed in one important study concerning breast tissue cysts. Consuming between 31 and 250 mg of caffeine (just 1/4 to 2 cups) per per day regularly led to "a 150% increase in the odds of developing fibrocystic breast disease". Women who consumed over 500 mg of caffeine each day were 230% more likely to develop cysts in their breast.

One study shows that if you drink 3 to 5 cups of coffee daily you reduce your risk of developing Alzheimer's disease or dementia by a full 65%. This research mirrors countless studies that show a positive correlation with a moderate coffee consumption and mental health. Cognitive function and memory enjoy a positive boost that begins only minutes after drinking coffee, and this mental "edge" can last for 2 or 3 hours at least.

Let's Hear from the Health Authorities

The Mayo Clinic recommends no more than 400 mg of caffeine every day (the amount in about 3.1 cups of coffee or 2 energy drinks). BBC News reports that the Food Standards Agency in the United Kingdom believes somewhere between 300 and 400 mg should not be exceeded. Findings in the British Medical Journal agree with the Mayo Clinic and the Food Standards Agency, adding a recommendation of no more than 200 mg of caffeine for pregnant women.

Multiple health agencies and caffeine "experts" around the world seem to believe that getting 300 to 400 mg of caffeine into your body each day is a healthy amount which should not be exceeded.

That means if you drink 2 to 3 cups of unflavored coffee without sugar and artificial sweeteners each day, you will probably not have any negative health consequences. As you will learn in just a bit, coffee is far from the only delivery system of caffeine into the human body. There are some pretty surprising foods and drinks with significant amounts of caffeine, so your morning cuppa Joe is not your only concern.

What does all this mean? Understanding global averages is great. It gives you an idea of what you may expect. However, you need to keep the following information in mind.

Everyone Is Different

Caffeine has different effects on different people. There are too many studies to reference that remind us how vastly different caffeine affects different people. Two nearly identical individuals of the same gender, age, nationality and fitness level may have decidedly different responses to any amount of caffeine.

While drinking too much coffee may cause one person incontinence or insomnia, it may not have any effect on someone else, or can even lead to the following allergic reactions to caffeine.

- Irritability and angry moods
- A lack of ability to concentrate and focus
- Panic attacks, anxiety, depression
- Skin problems like acne, eczema, hives and rashes
- A swelling of the throat or tongue
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Pain in the chest
- Muscle pain or a numbness in the hands and feet
- Shortness of breath
- Delusions or hallucinations
- Cold sweats
- Symptoms that mimic a cold or flu



These are signs that you probably need to limit or eliminate caffeine from your diet.

Looking at that list of allergic reactions to caffeine, you see that several of those symptoms could be caused by any number of health conditions. However, when you experience more than just a couple of the symptoms just listed, it might be a good idea to cut back on the amount of caffeine you consume, and then monitor your body's response.

How to Tell If You Are Addicted to Caffeine

We just talked about how people respond differently to caffeine. The same is true with all sorts of foods and beverages. What may be absolutely fine for someone to consume in large quantities can cause real health concerns in another person. Caffeine is, by definition, "a drug that stimulates the central nervous system, causing increased heart rate and alertness. It is addictive and may cause side-effects including headache, anxiety, dizziness, jitters, and heart problems."

Any drugs that cause a significant central nervous system response can become addictive, and caffeine is a prime example of this. As a matter of fact, "Caffeine operates using the same brain pathways as amphetamines, cocaine, and heroin."

In the United States, an astounding 90% of adults get some form of caffeine into their body each and every day. More than 50% of American adults consume 300 mg or more on a daily basis (the equivalent of more than 2.2 cups of coffee). By a wide margin, caffeine is the drug of choice in the United States, and the same holds true for many other countries. If you experience any of the symptoms mentioned earlier, but you continue to consciously ingest caffeine, you may be addicted.

Cutting back on the amount of coffee you drink is an easy way to limit how much caffeine you get into your body. However, some foods and beverages that you regularly eat and drink may also contain caffeine. Let's take a look at some sneaky ways caffeine is entering your body, hidden in some foods and drinks that may surprise you with their caffeine content.



Hidden Sources of Caffeine

When most people hear the word caffeine, their mind automatically and unconsciously thinks "coffee". That is a normal reaction. Coffee is without a doubt the best known source of caffeine, and the principal reason people drink coffee in the first place. Even those who don't drink coffee understand that the caffeine in coffee beans (which are actually seeds, not beans) can improve focus, deliver an energy kick, and boost alertness.

As we mentioned above, too much caffeine can cause health problems, so limit how many of the following foods and drinks enter your body since they often contain caffeine.

- Decaf coffee
- Protein bars
- Vitamin water
- Energy water
- Energy drinks
- Cola-based sodas
- Non-cola sodas
- Weight loss pills
- Ice cream
- Yogurt
- Pain relievers
- Candy bars
- Breath fresheners
- Chocolate
- Hot chocolate
- Instant oatmeal
- Beef jerky



How to Cut Back Gradually

The following tips can help you reduce how much caffeine you take into your body. Monitor your physical response as you cut back, and you can find the sweet spot that allows you to benefit from the "pros" of caffeine, without suffering from the "cons".

- Keep a caffeine journal. You can't reduce your caffeine intake if you don't measure it.
- Switch a cup of coffee or two every day with green or black tea, or some other type of caffeine-free herbal tea.
- Keep hydrated. You may be reaching for a cuppa Joe for an energy boost, and this may be due to your body being dehydrated.
- Go half caffeinated coffee and half decaf.
- Make your brew using fewer grounds.
- Use the free Caffeine Zone app. It lets you know when your coffee consumption will boost your productivity, when it will cause insomnia, and also tracks how much you are drinking.
- Switch your coffee with dandelion root coffee, which has no caffeine.
- Start reading food labels and know your ingredients.
- Use a smaller sized cup than you usually do.



Dealing with Caffeine Withdrawal

Caffeine withdrawal is a very real thing, causing irritability, fatigue and an inability to concentrate in some people. Caffeine dilates blood vessels in the brain, and this can cause pounding headaches. You may become extremely sleepy, unmotivated, experience a lack of energy, become constipated or depressed. You might become anxious and develop flu-like symptoms, or experience nausea and vomiting. You may have difficulty thinking and performing common tasks, become dizzy, or experience heart palpitations.

Withdrawal symptoms can begin from 10 to 20 hours after your last cup of coffee or other jolt of caffeine, usually peak 2 days later, and can last as long as a week. Keep the following tips in mind if you experience any of the above caffeine withdrawal symptoms.

- When symptoms rear their ugly head, drink 8 to 16 ounces of water. Drink water throughout the day.
- Exercise. Physical activity triggers the release of hormones and other chemicals which increase your level of happiness and can counteract the symptoms of caffeine withdrawal.
- Take aspirin or ibuprofen to treat headache and muscle pain, but make sure that your pain relievers do not contain caffeine.
- Get at least 7 to 8 hours of sleep each and every night.
- Change your diet. Eating predominantly plant-based foods is a good idea for a lot of reasons, and this type of diet has also proven helpful for limiting caffeine withdrawal symptoms.
- Be patient. While in extreme cases withdrawal symptoms could last as long as a month, the issue usually resolves itself after about 7 days.



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