



Caffeine and your health

Some people find that they just cannot deal with the day until they have had their morning jolt of caffeine. In fact, caffeine is the most popular drug consumed worldwide.



Where do you find caffeine?

Caffeine can be found in common foods such as:

- Coffee
- Tea
- Cola-type drinks
- Chocolate
- Some medications (including diet aids)
- Energy drinks, shots, powders

Hidden sources of caffeine

Two hidden sources of caffeine include guarana and Yerba mate.

Guarana, a Brazilian plant whose seeds are high in caffeine, is often added to energy drinks and some types of pop. Check the ingredient list on labels for guarana.

Yerba mate, a South American herb used to make tea, is also a source of caffeine.

Caffeine on the food label

The Canadian government does not require a food company to disclose caffeine that is naturally found in a food or beverage. However, if caffeine is added to a food or beverage, it must be included on the ingredient list. The amount, however, does not have to be listed.

How will caffeine affect me?

Caffeine affects each person differently. The differences depend on how much caffeine you consume and how your body processes it, as well as your age, body size, and health.

Some people find that they crave foods or drinks with caffeine. This is likely because of the stimulating effect of caffeine on our bodies.

Caffeine may cause a short-term increase in:

- Heart rate
- Body temperature
- Breathing rate
- Amount of urine produced
- Blood pressure
- Alertness and performance on certain tasks

For some people, caffeine consumption may cause headaches, irritability, nervousness and problems sleeping.



Some people feel no effects after consuming several servings of products containing caffeine. Others feel stimulating effects after only one serving. For adults, the effects of caffeine last for about two hours.

What is a safe amount of caffeine?

Health Canada advises that adults consume no more than 400 mg of caffeine each day. This would be about 2 to 2 ½ cups (16-20 oz or 500-625 mL) of filter drip coffee each day.

Take a look at the table on the back page for the caffeine content of your favourite beverage(s) or food.

Coffee lovers beware

Most mugs and medium-sized coffees at coffee shops are more than one cup (250 mL/8 oz).

Is caffeine addictive?

Many may not think of caffeine as a drug, but it's possible to become caffeine dependent. This means that when regular caffeine consumption is suddenly stopped, some people may feel withdrawal symptoms such as headaches, fatigue or drowsiness. These symptoms last only a day or so. To avoid these symptoms, slowly reduce the amount of caffeine you consume.

Does caffeine affect my health?

A moderate amount of caffeine is not a risk factor for diseases such as heart disease and osteoporosis. If you are consuming more than 400 mg of caffeine every day you may be replacing more nutritious beverages that you need to be healthy.

Children and women who are pregnant or breastfeeding are at greater risk from caffeine's effects.

Can I consume caffeine when I am trying to get pregnant, am pregnant or breastfeeding?

Women who are pregnant or who are planning to become pregnant should consume no more than 300 mg of caffeine (1½ cups (12 oz/375 mL) of filter drip coffee per day). This small amount of caffeine does not have a harmful effect on fertility or the fetus. If you consume caffeinated beverages and are breastfeeding, know that when the caffeine enters your bloodstream, a small amount of it will end up in your breast milk, and may cause your baby to become irritable or agitated.

For more information on herbal teas and pregnancy or breastfeeding, please refer to the fact sheet [Herbs and herbal teas: safety during pregnancy or while breastfeeding](#). To obtain a copy of this fact sheet, call Health Connection at: 1-800-361-5653.

Is caffeine safe for children?

Children and teens typically consume less caffeine than adults. Their intake of caffeine from caffeinated pop and iced coffee beverages, however, is on the rise. Health Canada advises that caffeine consumption by children and teens should be limited. The nervous system (including the brain) is developing during childhood, so children may be more sensitive to the effects of caffeine.

Caffeine intake, up to the maximum levels listed below, is not harmful to children and teens. These amounts of caffeine will not cause hyperactivity or attention deficit disorders.

Parents should encourage children and teens to choose more nutritious beverages such as milk, 100% fruit juice and water in order to limit caffeine intake.

Maximum amounts for children

Children who are four to six years old should have a maximum of 45 milligrams of



caffeine in a day. This is equivalent to one can of cola. For children seven to nine years old, a maximum of 63 milligrams a day is recommended. This is the amount if one and a half cans of cola. For children 10 to 12 years the maximum amount of caffeine recommended in a day is 85 milligrams. This is the amount in two cans of cola. For adolescents 13 and up it is recommended that they have no more than 2.5 milligrams of caffeine per kilogram of their body weight per day.

What about energy drinks?

Energy drinks are beverages that claim to give you energy and make you more alert. Most have ingredients like caffeine, sugar, vitamins and herbs.

Moderate use by adults is generally safe; however, side effects can happen if energy drinks are abused. Side effects that have been reported include irregular heartbeats and nervousness.

Health Canada has limited the amount of caffeine allowed in an energy drink to 400 mg per litre. This means that a small single serve energy drink (250 mL or less) can have approximately 80 – 100 mg of caffeine, and larger (473 mL) single serve cans are limited to 180 mg of caffeine. This is about the same amount as a cup of coffee.

Energy drinks should never be mixed with alcohol and should not be used during exercise. These beverages are usually high in sugar and contribute excess calories to the diet. Energy drinks should not be used by children, or pregnant and breastfeeding women.

Tips for cutting back on coffee

Since coffee is the most popular source of caffeine, it is a great place to look to cut back on caffeine. Keep in mind, the amount of caffeine in coffee varies a great deal depending on the type of coffee you drink,

how it is prepared, the type of coffee maker, and the size of your mug.

Some tips for cutting back on coffee include:

- Purchasing smaller sizes
- Considering replacing filter-drip with instant coffee
- Drinking decaffeinated coffee sometimes
- Mixing half a cup of decaffeinated coffee with half a cup of caffeinated coffee, and then slowly increase the amount of decaffeinated coffee
- Choosing a latte for a smaller shot of coffee and the adding lots of milk
- Choosing beverages such as milk or water more often

For more information and additional nutrition resources, visit our website at: www.york.ca/nutrition

You can speak to a registered dietitian at no cost by calling EatRight Ontario at: 1-877-510-5102 or by visiting: www.ontario.ca/eatright



Average caffeine content of common Canadian foods and beverages

Coffees	Serving size	Caffeine (mg)
Coffee, roasted and ground (percolated)	1 cup (250 mL)	118
Coffee, roasted and ground (filter drip)	1 cup (250 mL)	179
Coffee, regular instant (variety of brands)	1 cup (250 mL)	76 – 106
Coffee, decaffeinated brewed (variety of brands)	1 cup (250 mL)	3
Cafe latte	1 cup (250 mL)	35
Cappuccino	1 cup (250 mL)	69
Espresso	2 oz (60 mL)	70-125
Iced Coffee	2 cups (500 ml)	130-190
Teas		
Tea (variety of brands)	1 cup (250 mL)	43
Yerba mate	1 cup (250 mL)	80
Iced tea (bottled, canned or powder)	1 cup (250 mL)	15
Green tea	1 cup (250 mL)	30
Herbal tea and Tea, decaffeinated	1 cup (250 mL)	0
<i>Mugs/take-out cups are often larger than 250 mL and would contain more caffeine.</i>		
Pop		
Mountain Dew Energy – Citrus Charge	355 mL (1 can)	51
Pepsi/Coke or cola-type beverages	355 mL (1 can)	37
Diet Pepsi/Coke or cola-type beverage	355 mL (1can)	50
7-Up, Crush, other decaffeinated soft drinks	355 mL (1 can)	0
Energy Drinks		
Red Bull	355 mL(1 can)	113
Monster	473 ml (1 can)	166
Energy shots	2 oz (60 oz)	125-200
Chocolate products		
Chocolate milk	1 cup (250 mL)	5-8
Hot chocolate from vending machine or mix	1 cup (250 mL)	5-9
Chocolate bar	45g	11-23
Chocolate brownie (6cm x 6cm)	1.5 oz (42 g)	10
Ice creams		
Coffee-flavoured ice cream	½ cup (125 mL)	21
Chocolate-flavoured ice cream	½ cup (125 mL)	2
Yogurt		
Coffee-flavoured yogurt	175 g	10
Recommendation of caffeine for adults is no more than 400 mg		

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