



It's a myth that caffeine reduces the effects of alcohol, although many people still believe a cup of coffee will help a person to 'sober up'



High doses of caffeine can cause insomnia – delaying the onset of sleep and reducing total sleep time

What is caffeine?

Caffeine is a naturally occurring chemical compound found in the seeds, leaves and fruits of certain plants. Caffeine can be found in coffee, tea, cocoa, soft drinks, energy drinks, and chocolate or energy bars. Caffeine may also be found in some over-the-counter medications such as cough syrup and weight loss supplements.

How does caffeine affect the body?

Caffeine is a stimulant and acts to excite the brain and nervous system of the body. Short term effects of caffeine include increased alertness, increased urination, increased body temperature, irritability and restlessness. Caffeine doesn't eliminate the need for sleep; it only temporarily reduces the sensation of being tired! In large doses it may even result in difficulty sleeping. Longer term effects of caffeine, that may occur when taken every day may include headaches, dizziness, sleeplessness, stomach upsets, irregular heartbeat, and convulsions.

Some people can experience tremors which are thought to be due to the over-activation of the central nervous system. Like many other drugs it is possible to develop a tolerance to caffeine. This means the more you have the greater doses are needed to achieve the same effect. Over time your body might come to depend on caffeine in order to function at its best.

What are the common side effects of caffeine?

In addition to the previously mentioned effects of having caffeine, there are common side effects of caffeine that you should also be aware of. These can include feelings of tiredness, irritability, a persistent headache, sweating, vomiting and muscle pain. The best way to minimise these symptoms is to reduce your dependence on caffeine and gradually cut down on dosage. This will give your nervous system time to adapt to the lower levels of caffeine without too much stress from fast withdrawal.

Who should avoid caffeine?

For most people caffeine in small amounts is generally well tolerated without too much inconvenience, however some people may find that they are particularly sensitive to caffeine and/or its effects. If you categorise yourself into one of these groups, then minimising caffeine would be ideal.

- People who are prone to stress, anxiety, or sleep problems,
- Women with painful, lumpy breasts,
- People with acid reflux or stomach ulcers,
- People with high blood pressure that does not respond to treatment,

- People who have problems with fast or irregular heart rhythms, and
- People who have chronic headaches.

Is caffeine a diuretic?

Taken sporadically, caffeine has a diuretic effect which results in an increased amount and frequency of urination. Regular ingestion of caffeine can result in your body developing a tolerance so it is less sensitive to caffeine and its diuretic effect. Caffeine tolerance develops very quickly, especially among heavy coffee, soft drink and energy drink consumers. Research suggests that complete tolerance to the sleep disruption effects of caffeine develops after only consuming 400 mg of caffeine 3 times a day for 7 days!

How much caffeine should I consume?

On average, it is recommended that caffeine consumption be limited to less than 500mg per day. Two to three cups of coffee per day (about 250mg of caffeine) is considered an average or moderate amount of caffeine and still gives you less than 500mg of caffeine.

Item		Size	Typical caffeine content
Coffee	Instant	150ml	60-100mg
	Percolated	150ml	100-150mg
	Espresso	150ml	90mg
	Decaffeinated	150ml	2-4mg
Tea		150ml	30-100mg
Soft drinks		250ml	30-60mg
Energy drinks		250ml	80mg
Chocolate bar		100g bar	20-60mg
Caffeine tablet eg No-Doz		1 tablet	100-150mg

Caffeine and pregnancy

While having large amounts of caffeine does not appear to cause birth defects, drinking high amounts of caffeine may make it more difficult to become pregnant and may increase risk of miscarriage or having a baby with low birth weight. Having said this, there has been research that both support and refute the consumption of caffeine during pregnancy and its potentially negative effects.

So, what do we recommend? Limit your daily intake of caffeine to less than 200mg per day if you are pregnant. If you have a high caffeine diet, you may need to slowly wean off caffeine to prevent withdrawal effects.



Foods high in caffeine include coffee, soft drinks, energy drinks and chocolate



Reduce caffeine gradually to avoid symptoms of withdrawal



Did you know that your cup of coffee from your local café varies greatly in caffeine content; it can have between 115-290mg of caffeine per cup



2.1 billion cups of coffee are sold every year in Australia

Put what you've learnt into practice....

1. Think about what you ate yesterday. What did you eat or drink that contains caffeine?
2. Can you think of any caffeine-free or lower-caffeine alternatives that you could incorporate into your diet?
3. Who should avoid the consumption of caffeine?

To book an appointment with one of our dietitians please visit us at www.nutritionplus.com.au