

# CAFFEINE

## What is Caffeine?

Caffeine is a stimulant drug that could be manufactured in a laboratory, but is most often cultivated from over 60 plants such as the Arabian coffee shrub, commercial tea plants, cocoa beans and kola nuts. Caffeine is a substance found in coffee, tea, cocoa, soft drinks and some chocolates. Additionally, it is also used in a wide variety of medications, including pain relievers and most common cold medications.

## Who Uses Caffeine?

The North American population experiences wide exposure to caffeine through the many products that contain it. The primary sources of caffeine for adults 25 and older are coffee or tea. Children and young adults take caffeine primarily through soft drinks and chocolate.



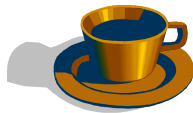
Large doses of caffeine could make you feel irritable, restless, and nervous. Headaches are common with high doses of caffeine, and tremors, insomnia, symptoms of anxiety, and a rapid, irregular heartbeat could also result.

## What Happens If I Use Caffeine?

Caffeine, even in relatively small doses, can combat tiredness, increasing alertness and ability to concentrate. It increases heart rate, blood pressure, and urination, and could also increase your ability to do physical work and improve your thinking.

## Are There Any Benefits To Using Caffeine?

Caffeine has been found useful in the treatment of certain types of headaches, including migraines. You should consult with your doctor to determine if caffeine is a good option for addressing your headaches.



## When Is Using Caffeine A Problem?

Based on research to date, Health Canada has indicated that moderate caffeine intake, which is considered to be 400 to 450mg per day for the average adult, is not associated with any adverse effects.

There is some evidence to suggest that consumption of more than 300mg of caffeine per day is associated with miscarriages and low birth weight babies. Health Canada guidelines reflect this recommended maximum during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Women may also elect to eliminate caffeine use during pregnancy.

There are also concerns regarding caffeine use in children, particularly in soft drinks and chocolate. Concerns regarding childhood consumption revolve primarily around dietary impact. A child consuming one can of cola will experience the equivalent impact of an adult consuming four cups of coffee. Health Canada guidelines indicate the following daily maximums for caffeine intake in children:

- 45 mg per day for children age 4-6
- 62.5 mg per day for children aged 7 – 9
- 85 mg per day for children aged 10 – 12

Consumption of caffeine at levels significantly higher than recommended could result in caffeine toxicity. Side effects of toxicity include: nausea, diarrhea, indigestion, light-headedness, irregular heartbeat, and jitteriness.

Caffeine consumption could lead to the development of tolerance and physical dependency to caffeine. If physical dependency is present and caffeine consumption is suddenly stopped, you may experience the following withdrawal symptoms:

- headaches
- sleep problems
- tiredness
- nausea
- irritability
- decreased alertness
- anxiety and
- depression

Symptoms peak during the first 12 to 48 hours, and typically subside within a week.

Research into the long-term effects of caffeine is inconclusive. However, research suggests that long-term use could lead to a higher incidence of asthma, peptic ulcers, kidney, bladder and heart disease, and blood pressure problems.

### Caffeine Content

Coffee	-	40 - 180 mg (1 cup)
Decaffeinated Coffee	-	2 – 5 mg (1 cup)
Tea	-	10 – 110 mg (1 cup)
Cola Drinks	-	30 – 60 mg (12oz/355ml)
Stimulants	-	100 – 250 mg (1 tablet)
Painkillers	-	30 – 100 mg (1 tablet)
Dark Chocolate	-	40 – 50 mg (2 oz/56g)
Milk Chocolate	-	3 – 20 mg (2 oz/56g)



### Where Do I Go For Additional Help?

If you are concerned about your caffeine consumption or have experienced withdrawal symptoms when you have decreased or stopped consuming caffeine, you may elect to seek assistance from a doctor or other knowledgeable source.

Substance Information LINK

[www.silink.ca](http://www.silink.ca)

BC Partners for Mental Health and Addiction Information

[www.heretohelp.bc.ca](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca)

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