

CAFFEINE

Fact sheet

WHAT IS IT ?

Caffeine is a naturally occurring stimulant found in tea, coffee and cocoa as well as some other plant based foods. It can also be produced synthetically and used as an additive in 'energy type drinks'. Foods containing caffeine have been used for medicinal purposes for thousands of years. Indigenous tribes in Africa and South America used it in the form of coffee and cocoa. Caffeine is one of the most commonly consumed stimulants in the world. Absorbed easily and rapidly by both the stomach and small intestine, it then circulates throughout the whole body, including the brain. Like everything, caffeine should be consumed in moderate amounts.

WHAT DOES IT DO ?

Caffeine is a central nervous system stimulant and low doses (i.e. 20-200 mg) are generally associated with mood effects, such as feelings of increased energy, efficiency, self-confidence, alertness, motivation and concentration.¹ However, it has also been reported that caffeine, even in low doses, in some people may reduce the quality of sleep¹. It seems that these effects diminish with regular consumption.

CAFFEINE MYTHS - TRUE OR FALSE?

Myth 1: Since caffeine increases the body's excretion of calcium, caffeine consumption may increase the risk of osteoporosis

False! Current scientific evidence supporting this theory is inconclusive and it is thought that milk commonly consumed with caffeinated beverages such as coffee and tea counterbalance this effect.¹

Myth 2: Caffeine causes dehydration.²

False! It appears that caffeinated fluids, when consumed in moderation, contribute to daily fluid intake in a manner that is similar to water.

HOW MUCH SHOULD I HAVE?

As caffeine is not an essential component of a normal diet there are no Recommended Dietary Intakes. The levels of consumption are shown below. Australian adults generally consume about 232mg of caffeine per day per person from all sources.

Low doses of caffeine are: 80-250mg per day (1.1-3.5mg/kg/day)
Moderate doses of caffeine are: 300-400mg per day (4-6mg/kg/day)
High doses of caffeine are: >500mg per day (>7mg/kg/day)

300mg is the level generally accepted as the recommended limit of caffeine intake for adults, although this does vary between different health agencies in different countries. The table below will help you work out your caffeine intake from some of the most common sources.³



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CAFFEINE CONTENT OF COMMONLY CONSUMED FOODS & DRINKS ⁴

Food	Caffeine per 100ml/g	Caffeine per serve	Serving size
Coffee, espresso	194 mg	78mg	40mL cup
Coffee, instant	31mg	62mg	200mL cup
Tea	19mg	38mg	200mL cup
Cola soft drink	9mg	34mg	375mL can
Energy drink	32mg	80mg	250mL can
Milk chocolate drink	2.1mg	4.6mg	20g in 200mL milk
Chocolate, dark	59mg	11mg	20g piece
Chocolate milk	20mg	4mg	20g piece

PEOPLE WHO NEED TO EXERCISE CAUTION WITH CAFFEINE

- Pregnant women should avoid consuming caffeine and consult their health care professional for advice.
- A small number of people are 'caffeine sensitive' and experience increased effects from caffeine. These people should seek advice from their doctor about their safe intake of caffeine.
- People with heart conditions should also discuss caffeine intake with their health care professional.

Note:

In most cases caffeine-free alternatives are available for people who are unable to consume caffeine.

References

¹ Smith PF, et al. Report from the working group on the safety aspects of dietary caffeine. Australia New Zealand Food Authority (now FSANZ), June 2000.

² Armstrong L., Casa D., Maresh C. and Ganio M. Caffeine, fluid-electrolyte balance, temperature regulation, and exercise-heat tolerance. *Exerc. Sport Sci Rev*, July 2007, Vol. 35, No. 3, 135-140

³ Fredholm, B.B., Battig, K., Holman, J., Nehlig, A. and Zvartau, E.E. (1999) Actions of caffeine in the brain with special reference to factors that contribute to its widespread use. *Pharmacological Reviews*. 51: 83-133.

⁴ Source: NUTTAB Australian Food Composition Tables. FSANZ 2006.

This fact sheet contains general information. Please consult your healthcare professional for specific advice for your personal situation.



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