

## Sacrificing Health for Energy

With coffee shops conveniently located on most corners and the frequent introduction of new energy drinks, caffeine consumption remains prevalent and the dangers of exceeding moderate caffeine consumption are often ignored.

Caffeine can temporarily make us feel more alert by blocking sleep-inducing chemicals in the brain and increasing adrenaline production; however, while supplying energy, caffeine induces anxiety, contributes to the physiological and physical symptoms of stress and can greatly affect sleep.

The adrenaline boost in your system from caffeine will provide only a temporary energy boost and may make you feel drowsy, fatigued and depressed later. Caffeine consumption—through coffee, tea, soft drinks, chocolate and other pre-packaged products—is linked to restlessness, nervousness, headaches, diarrhea, insomnia and breast or prostate cancers. Other health consequences may range from weight gain and moodiness to diabetes and possibly heart disease.

Caffeine has also been suggested as a risk for osteoporosis because caffeine intake has been shown to increase calcium excretion in urine. Similarly, caffeine affects the kidneys by increasing urination and the likelihood of dehydration, which causes blood vessels to dilate and may lead to headaches. In addition, caffeine can lead to stomach upset, which can result in gastrointestinal problems such as reflux disease and acid stomach. Whether high caffeine intake also increases the risk of coronary heart disease is still under study and the results are conflicting; however, based on blood vessel constriction, it is certain that caffeine can at least temporarily elevate blood pressure. Uncontrolled high blood pressure can lead to stroke, heart attack, heart failure or kidney failure.

Milligrams of Caffeine*		
Item	Range	Typical
Coffee, 8 oz		
<i>Brewed, drip method</i>	104-192	100-115
<i>Instant</i>	60-85	75
<i>Decaffeinated</i>	2-4	3
Espresso, 1 oz cup	30-50	40
Tea, 8 oz brewed	20-110	40-60
Iced tea, 8 oz	9-50	25-45
Tea, green, 8 oz	15-50	15
Cocoa, 8 oz	3-32	6-14
Milk chocolate, 1 oz	1-15	6
Dark chocolate, 1 oz	5-35	20
Soft Drinks, 8 oz	20-40	24

\*denotes average amount of caffeine

Caffeine and stress can both elevate the body's levels of cortisol, the "stress hormone." As cortisol levels elevate, your mood may soar and plummet; creating a vicious cycle of caffeine cravings and eventual loss of sleep. Small to moderate amounts of caffeine are relatively harmless, but exceeding appropriate doses can be dangerous to your health. It is generally agreed as safe for most adults to consume up to 300 mg per day, which is approximately the amount of caffeine you would get from three cups of coffee. However, caffeine sensitivity depends on many factors, including the frequency and amount of regular intake, body weight and physical condition. Some individuals may be sensitive to caffeine and will feel effects at smaller doses than do individuals who are less sensitive.

## Attaining Energy, Avoiding Health Risks

Physical activity naturally boosts your energy level and increases endorphins in the body, lifting your mood. However, as we progress from children to adults, physical activity decreases and therefore, energy levels decrease as well.

Seventy seven percent of Americans are currently not physically active enough to limit their health risk factors, based on reports from the American College of Sports Medicine. The recommended amount of exercise is 30 minutes of physical activity four days a week or more and this amount can be broken up into 10 minute segments.

Though caffeine temporarily increases energy, it increases the likelihood of negative health consequences already possible because of lessening physical activity with age. Conversely, exercise improves energy levels and mood; builds healthy muscles, bones and joints; and reduces the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, osteoporosis—health risks induced by caffeine use.

In addition to proper exercise, improving sleep habits is another healthy means to attain energy. The amount of time each night or quality of sleep we receive often gets compromised with age and caffeine consumption acts as an additional contributing factor for sleep deprivation. The National Sleep Foundation reports the effects of caffeine can cause problems falling asleep as much as 10-12 hours later in some people.

Avoiding caffeine consumption four to six hours before bed, establishing a regular sleep routine, incorporating bedtime rituals and indulging in an appropriate bedtime snack may help regulate your sleep cycle. Keep your sleep schedule consistent by going to bed and waking up at the same time each day and avoid oversleeping. Integrate rituals

milk before bedtime. An amino acid called tryptophan, found in milk, turkey and peanuts, helps the brain produce serotonin, a chemical that helps you relax. Plus, the warmth may temporarily increase your body temperature and the subsequent drop may hasten sleep.

Meditation and working on breathing are also great ways to boost energy and lower stress levels. Many people don't take in adequate amounts of oxygen and furthermore, breaths become more rapid and shallow after consuming caffeine.

Deep breathing, which involves breathing from your stomach rather than your chest, is a very crucial part of lowering stress levels. Deep breathing helps decrease your heart rate and also brings endorphins into the system, lifting your mood and raising your energy.

Above all, keep stress levels low and health risks limited by managing caffeine consumption and developing an overall healthy lifestyle. Start off with a gentle workout routine, focusing more on hydration—taking in more water to decrease caffeine needs—and then, slowly tapering off caffeine intakes. Mix coffee, half decaf and half caffeinated and continue to gradually decrease your caffeine intake. Also, coffee with 1/3 the caffeine is available in stores and may be a helpful investment in maintaining safe caffeine consumption.

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Milligrams of Caffeine**	
Product	Amount of caffeine
Red Bull/Sugar-free Red Bull, 8.3 oz	80
Mountain Dew/Diet Mountain Dew, 12 oz	55
Coca-Cola, 12 oz	34
Diet Coke, 12 oz	45
Pepsi, 12 oz	37.5
Diet Pepsi, 12 oz	36
Pepsi One, 12 oz	55.5
Dr. Pepper/Diet Dr. Pepper, 12 oz	41
Sunkist Orange, 12 oz	40
Diet Sunkist Orange, 12 oz	41
Snapple Flavored Teas (Reg. or Diet), 12 oz	31.5
7-Up/Sprite/Sierra Mist, 12 oz	0
Mug Root Beer/A&W Root Beer, 12 oz	0
Cold relief medication	30 (avg. amt.)
Vivarin (over-the-counter caffeine tablet)	200

Sources:

\* U.S. Food and Drug Administration and National Soft Drink Association

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International Food Information Council

American Beverage Association