



DAY IN DAY OUT

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

Is Caffeine OK?

If you're like many other adults, you rely on a cup of coffee or tea to help you wake up and get ready for the day. It's estimated that about 85 to 90 percent of Americans drink at least one caffeinated beverage per day.

WHAT IS CAFFEINE?

Caffeine is a natural stimulant most commonly found in tea, coffee, and cacao plants. It works by stimulating the brain and central nervous system, helping you stay alert and prevent the onset of tiredness. Once consumed, caffeine is quickly absorbed from the stomach and intestine into the bloodstream. From there, it travels to the liver and is broken down into compounds that can affect the function of various organs.

Caffeine affects people differently due to the speed that the body breaks it down. How fast your body does this depends on several factors, including your genetics. Caffeine also interacts with other chemicals in the brain. If you consume more than normal, some of these interactions are what make you feel "overcaffeinated." Your heart may race, or you can feel anxious, shaky or sick to your stomach.

SHOULD YOU KEEP HAVING THAT CUP OF COFFEE?

Most research suggests that caffeine is likely harmless for most healthy adults in low to moderate amounts. Some studies even show that caffeine can have positive effects on thinking, learning, and memory. However, experts recommend that people with acid reflux, ulcers, high blood pressure, heart disorders, and those who have trouble sleeping avoid caffeine. Children, teens,



Talk with your doctor if you have any concerns about your health.

and women who are pregnant or breastfeeding are also often advised to stay away from caffeine.

Lastly, health professionals advise that adults should avoid mixing caffeine with alcohol. This is because caffeine can block the brain from feeling the depressant effects of alcohol. This might lead someone to drink more than they normally would, increasing their impairment. Talk with your healthcare provider if you're concerned about caffeine and your health.

ENERGY DRINKS: A WORD OF CAUTION

While a few cups of unsweetened coffee or tea each day are likely fine for most people, some drinks, specifically those labeled as energy drinks, include very high amounts of caffeine and sugar. Excess sugar isn't good for the body or brain, and high amounts of caffeine can also have negative effects. In fact, consuming energy

drinks has raised several safety concerns. Here are just a few:

- » A growing body of scientific evidence shows that energy drinks can have serious health effects, particularly in children, teenagers, and young adults.
- » In several studies, energy drinks have been found to improve physical endurance, but there's less evidence of any effect on muscle strength or power. Energy drinks may enhance alertness and improve reaction time, but they may also reduce steadiness of the hands.
- » The amounts of caffeine in energy drinks vary widely, and the actual caffeine content may not be identified easily. Some energy drinks are marketed as beverages and others as dietary supplements. There's no requirement to declare the amount of caffeine on the label of either type of product.



Bottom line: if you consume an energy drink, read the label carefully and with caution. Children and/or teens should not consume energy drinks—in fact most energy drinks have warning labels that they are not intended for anyone younger than 18.