

CAFFEINE

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Did you know that more than 80% of Americans consume at least one caffeinated drink every day? Caffeine is considered a natural stimulant. You can start to feel the effect of caffeine as soon as 20 minutes after drinking a cup of coffee. Moderate caffeine intake, defined as up to 400 mg a day for adults and less than 85 mg a day for teens – although not recommended, is considered safe. This is about the same as four cups of regular coffee or 10 cans of soda – although caffeine content obviously can vary for different beverages and brands (see below). Also keep in mind the travel and coffee mugs of today are much larger than those our grandparents sipped from, so you may be consuming 2-3 actual cups of coffee in just one of your mugs.

Food/Beverage	Caffeine (mg) (content may vary)
Coffee (1 cup)	
brewed	95-100
instant	60
decaf	2-12
Tea (1 cup)	
brewed	45
brewed green	20
brewed decaf	2
Colas (12 ounces)	20
Energy drinks	80-500
Energy Shots (1 oz)	215
Chocolate Milk (1 cup)	5
Espresso shot (1 oz)	63
Dark Chocolate (1 oz)	24

Potential Benefits of Moderate Caffeine Intake	Potential Dangers of Excessive Caffeine Intake
improved alertness	anxiety
better short term memory	trouble sleeping or poor quality sleep
shortened reaction time	irregular heartbeat
reduced risk of Alzheimer's & Parkinson's diseases	promote headaches
improved mood	elevated blood pressure and heart rate
reduced risk of heart disease	increased risk of miscarriage
	more likely to engage in risky behaviors

Current FDA guidelines require a product to indicate on the label if it contains caffeine, however manufacturers are not required to indicate how much caffeine is actually in the product. There is no recommended "upper limit" for caffeine intake set for Americans at this time. You can purchase caffeine in a powder or liquid form, but these can contain about the same amount of caffeine as 28 cups of coffee in a single teaspoon!

Adverse reactions are a real concern with caffeine when combined with certain medications and alcohol. Consuming 500 mg of caffeine in a single dose has even resulted in death. Keep in mind that some people are more sensitive to the effects of caffeine than others.

Current recommendations for coffee lovers is 3-5 cups daily or less than 400 mg caffeine daily. Coffee contains antioxidants that can protect cells from negative effects of stress. Studies done on the benefits of coffee and tea are done with the unsweetened versions, so as you add sugar and creamers you may be reducing the benefits. Also, make sure you use a coffee filter when brewing. The filter removes a compound in the coffee called cafestol, which is known to increase LDL or "bad" cholesterol. French press coffee is not filtered, therefore it may not be good for you depending on how much you sip.

