

I NEED
MY
CAFFEINE!



Caffeine Is a Common Chemical

Caffeine is a natural chemical found in tea leaves, coffee beans, cacao (the stuff used to make chocolate), and cola nuts (the plant that gives cola soda its flavor).

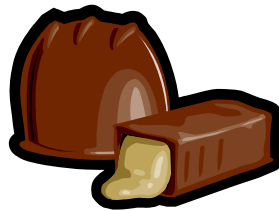
Caffeine has been in foods that humans eat and drink for hundreds of years. Today, caffeine is found in many common foods and drinks, such as coffee, tea, hot cocoa, soda, chocolate, and some medicines.

When humans drink or eat caffeine, it acts as a **stimulant**.

Stimulants may make us feel more awake and alert. Many people drink liquids with caffeine because they think it helps them to wake up and feel sharper.

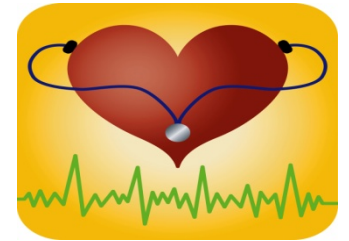
People who drink caffeine every day may start to depend on it. If regular caffeine users don't get their regular daily dose, look out!

People who are used to caffeine and don't get it can develop headaches, stomachaches, and feel sleepy or grumpy all day long.

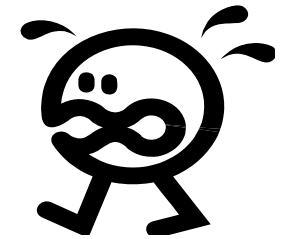


What Does Caffeine Do to Your Body?

Caffeine can cause your heart to pump faster and your breathing to quicken. You also may notice that caffeine makes you feel hyper and makes it harder to concentrate in school. Caffeine can boost a person's energy temporarily, but a lot of caffeine can also cause other, not-so-great effects.



If you drink too much caffeine at one time, it can make you feel nervous or jumpy. Your hands may shake. Too much caffeine will make it hard to fall asleep, which might mean you won't be able to pay attention in school the next day.



And too much caffeine can give you a stomachache, headache, or a racing heartbeat. In fact, kids with heart problems should not drink caffeine because it's known to affect heart rates and force the heart to work harder.



Caffeine Chart

Drink/Food	Amount of Drink/Food	Amount of Caffeine
Mountain Dew	12 ounces	55.0 mg
Coca-Cola	12 ounces	34.0 mg
Diet Coke	12 ounces	45.0 mg
Pepsi	12 ounces	38.0 mg
7-Up	12 ounces	0 mg
Brewed coffee (drip method)	5 ounces	115 mg*
Iced tea	12 ounces	70 mg*
Dark chocolate	1 ounce	20 mg*
Milk chocolate	1 ounce	6 mg*
Cocoa beverage	5 ounces	4 mg*
Chocolate milk beverage	8 ounces	5 mg*
Cold relief medication	1 tablet	30 mg*

This is an average amount of caffeine. That means some of these products may contain a little more caffeine; some may contain a little less.

Sources: U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and National Soft Drink Association

Cutting the Caffeine

If you're taking in too much caffeine, you may want to cut back. The best way is to cut back slowly. Otherwise you could get headaches and feel tired, irritable, or just plain lousy.

Try cutting your intake by replacing caffeinated sodas and coffee with noncaffeinated drinks. Examples include water, caffeine-free sodas, and caffeine-free teas.

Keep track of how many caffeinated drinks you have each day, and substitute one drink per week with a caffeine-free alternative until you've gotten below the 100-milligram mark.

As you cut back on the amount of caffeine you consume, you may find yourself feeling tired.

Your best bet is to hit the sack, not the sodas: It's just your body's way of telling you it needs more rest. Your energy levels will return to normal in a few days.

