

## Healthful Hints for Stressful Times: Caffeine Use

With increasing workloads, demands in your personal life, pressures at school or on the job, you may find that you need help to keep your energy up during this busy and stressful time. Some people often turn to the powerful central nervous system stimulant, caffeine, for its "awakening" effect. But too much may actually be counterproductive when symptoms of "caffeinism" -- restlessness, disturbed sleep, rapid heart rate, shakiness, and stomach upset -- interrupt your ability to function throughout the day.

Caffeine is a habit-forming drug found in coffee, tea, soft drinks, and many over-the-counter medications. As with many drugs, regular users develop a tolerance and require higher doses to obtain the expected effect. You may not recognize the addictive signs until you miss your morning fix. Complaints of headache and fatigue may be signs that your body did not receive its usual dose of caffeine. These same symptoms may be experienced if and when you decide to reduce your caffeine intake permanently, however, symptoms usually subside within a week.

Caffeine has been implicated in a number of health problems. Everything from elevated blood cholesterol, cancer, and benign breast disease have been suggested. While the scientific studies are far from conclusive, a prudent caffeine intake -- no more than 200 milligrams a day -- is the recommended maximum to minimize any adverse health effects.

Many people consume caffeine in much greater quantity than 200 milligrams per day. Assess your intake using "Caffeine Counts of Common Foods and Beverages." If you're experiencing any signs of caffeinism, perhaps it is time to cut back.

Below are ways to reduce your caffeine intake:

- ❑ **Cut back slowly.** To avoid symptoms of caffeine withdrawal, slowly cut back to one to two "cups" (5 ounces each) of coffee per day.
- ❑ **Watch out for other sources of caffeine.** Be aware of "hidden" caffeine in chocolate, sodas, and medication.
- ❑ **Dilute your coffee.** Drink coffee mixed with half water or milk. Many popular coffee beverages on and around campus are made with milk and coffee or espresso. Figures on the caffeine content of espresso are not readily available, but it is significantly higher than brewed coffee. Generally, cafe au laits are made with one-half brewed coffee, lattes with one-third espresso, and cappuccinos with two-thirds espresso.
- ❑ **Drink caffeine-free beverages.** There are many alternatives to coffee. Try caffeine-free herbal teas and sodas, decaffeinated coffee, warm water with lemon, hot apple cider, milk and juices.

- ❑ **Energize with exercise.** When your energy levels are waning, don't reach for another cup of coffee. Get up and take a walk! Take a 5 to 10 minute break, get outside, and take a brisk walk throughout your building or around the block. The walk will re-energize you enough to get you through the rest of the day.

Caffeine may seem like the answer to keeping your energy levels up, but it's nearly impossible to concentrate well without sleep. If you are not sleeping well or if you are experiencing any of the signs of caffeinism, the stimulating effect of caffeine may actually be hindering rather than helping you get through day.

### **Caffeine Counts of Common Food and Beverages**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Milligrams of Caffeine*</b>
Coffee, 5 ounces	
Brewed, drip method	115
Brewed, percolator	80
Instant	65
Decaffeinated, brewed or instant	3
Tea, 5 ounces	
Brewed, 5 minutes	50
Brewed, 1 minute	30
Instant (12 ounces)	70
Chocolate	
Cocoa beverage, 5 ounces	4
Chocolate milk, 8 ounces	5
Milk chocolate, 1 ounce	6
Dark chocolate, semi-sweet, 1 ounce	20
Chocolate flavored syrup, 1 ounce	4
Over-The-Counter Medications, Tablet or Capsule	
No Doz Tablets	100
Vivarin Tablets	200
Excedrin	65
Vanquish	33
Anacin	32
Midol	32
Triaminicin	30
Dexatrim	200
Soft Drinks, 12 ounces	
Sugar-free Mr. Pibb	60
Mountain Dew	54
TAB	46
Diet Coke	46
Coca-Cola	45
Shasta Cola	44
Shasta Diet Cola	44
Sunkist Orange	40
Mr. Pibb	40
Dr. Pepper	40
Sugar-free Dr. Pepper	40
Pepsi-Cola	38
Diet Pepsi	36
Pepsi Light	36
RC Cola	36

\*Figures are approximations only.

Also see:

**How to Manage the Stress of these Difficult Times**, available at [www.uhs.berkeley.edu](http://www.uhs.berkeley.edu).

**Healthful Hints for Stressful Times: Eating Well**

**Healthful Hints for Stressful Times: Headaches & Muscle Tension**

**Healthful Hints for Stressful Times: Sleeping Soundly**

**Healthful Hints for Stressful Times: Staying Active**

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