

Caffeine

What is caffeine?

Caffeine is a drug that is found naturally in the leaves and seeds of many plants. It can also be made artificially and added to some foods.

Where is caffeine found?

Caffeine is found naturally in:

- Coffee beans
- Tea leaves
- Kola nuts (cola)
- Cocoa beans (chocolate)
- Guarana (in some energy drinks)
- Yerba maté leaves (in some tea and energy drinks)

Artificial caffeine is often added to:

- Energy drinks
- Some medications, especially cold and headache remedies
- Some soft drinks*

Caffeine might not be listed on a food label. Check the ingredient list to see if caffeine, or an ingredient that contains caffeine, is in the product.

*Health Canada recently announced it is now allowing the use of caffeine as a food additive in all carbonated soft drinks, not just cola-type drinks. Soft drinks that did not previously contain caffeine may now have a “contains caffeine” statement on the label. Labels will have caffeine, or ingredient that contains caffeine, listed in the ingredient list.



What are the effects of caffeine?

- For healthy adults, a small amount of caffeine may temporarily make you more alert, better able to concentrate, and boost your mood.
- Some people are more sensitive to caffeine and may feel irritable and nervous, get headaches, or have trouble sleeping.
- Caffeine’s unpleasant effects like irritability, nervousness, headaches and trouble sleeping can be worse in children. The maximum daily amount of caffeine for a child is less than for adults because it’s based on their body weight.
- Caffeine may make you urinate more often.
- Caffeine can decrease the amount of calcium and iron that your body can absorb from food. It is best not to have coffee or tea with your meals.
- Too many caffeine-containing drinks may take the place of more nutritious foods or beverages like milk, water and fruit juices.

Can I have caffeine when I’m pregnant or breastfeeding?

During pregnancy, caffeine passes from mother to baby. Women, who are consuming more than **300 mg** of caffeine each day, may increase the risk of having a miscarriage or a small baby.

If you are breastfeeding, caffeine can also pass into breast milk. This might cause your baby to be fussy or very alert. Caffeine may make it more difficult for your baby to sleep.

How much caffeine is okay?

Health Canada recommends the following amounts of caffeine which are considered safe for each age group:

Life Stages	Amount (mg/day)
Children 4–6 years	45
Children 7–9 years	62.5
Children 10–12 years	85
Pregnant women	300
Breastfeeding women	300
Healthy adults	400
Reference: Health Canada – It's Your Health – Caffeine. http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/food-aliment/caffeine-eng.php	

How can I cut down on my caffeine intake?

- Cut down gradually to avoid headaches and sleepiness
- Add extra milk to coffee or tea. Try a café-au-lait (½ coffee and ½ milk)
- Use instant coffee instead of brewed coffee
- Brew tea for a shorter time
- Try half regular and half decaf coffee
- Have your coffee or tea in a smaller cup
- Read labels carefully. Check the ingredient list for words such as mocha, cappuccino, or fudge. Foods or drinks with these words may contain caffeine.
- Try the following drinks instead:
 - › water
 - › milk
 - › fortified soy beverage
 - › 100% pure fruit or vegetable juice
 - › hot water with lemon or honey



Sources of Caffeine

Coffee	Serving Size	Caffeine (mg)
Filter drip, brewed or percolated	250 mL (1 cup)	118–179
Instant – regular or flavoured	250 mL (1 cup)	76–106
Espresso	30 mL (1 oz)	30–50
Decaffeinated	250 mL (1 cup)	3
Instant – decaffeinated	250 mL (1 cup)	5
Cappuccino	250 mL (1 cup)	69
Café latte	250 mL (1 cup)	35
Soft Drinks	Serving Size	Caffeine (mg)
Cola – regular or diet	355 mL (can)	36–50
Ginger ale or lemon-lime type soft drinks	355 mL (can)	0
Energy drinks	250 mL (1 cup)	78–130
Tea	Serving Size	Caffeine (mg)
Bag or leaf	250 mL (1 cup)	50
Instant	250 mL (1 cup)	15
Green tea	250 mL (1 cup)	30
Iced tea	250 mL (1 cup)	25
Cocoa Products	Serving Size	Caffeine (mg)
Chocolate milk	250 mL (1 cup)	5–8
Hot chocolate mix	1 envelope	5
Milk chocolate	28 g (1 oz)	7
Dark chocolate	28 g (1 oz)	25–58
Medications		
Some drugs may contain as much as 1000 mg of caffeine in a daily dose. Read the label or talk to your pharmacist for the caffeine content.		

Keep in mind...

It is very easy for children and adults to quickly get the maximum amount of caffeine in a day. For example:

- One to 2 cans of cola for children
- 2 to 3 cups (500–750 mL) of coffee a day for adults
- A medium sized coffee at the coffee shop is more than 250 mL (1 cup), and so are most mugs you might have in your cupboard at home. **You may be drinking more than you think!**