

Caffeine and Teens

What is caffeine?

Caffeine is a stimulant that works on the central nervous system, which can increase alertness and give you a boost of energy. If you have parents that don't function until they've had their morning coffee, you can understand.

Caffeine is naturally found in plants, however it can also be added to things like energy drinks, sport drinks, carbonated soft drinks and medicine.

How does it affect me?

In teens, moderate caffeine intake has not been associated with any negative effects. However, if you consume more than the recommended maximum intake per day, you may experience some not so pretty side effects such as:

- Jitteriness/ anxiousness
- Upset stomach
- Dehydration, as it makes your body lose water
- Insomnia
- Increased blood pressure
- Uneven heart rhythm, called arrhythmia
- Seizures
- Death



How much caffeine can I have in a day?

Health Canada suggests no more than 2.5 mg/kg of body weight per day for youth thirteen and older. For example, for a teen who weighs 125 pounds (57 kg), that works out to about 140 mg per day – roughly one cup of coffee.

PPM 150 guidelines

The School Food and Beverage Policy (PPM 150) implemented in all publicly funded elementary and secondary schools in Ontario does not allow the sale for school purposes, of energy drinks, caffeinated coffee, tea, chocolate bars and sports drinks as they do not meet the nutrition standards. These products are classified under "Not Permitted for Sale" as they contain few or no essential nutrients.

Energy drinks are in their own category.

Energy drinks are not recommended for children and teens because of their high caffeine content. Side effects such as rapid heart rate and increased blood pressure have been reported. In some cases, one energy drink could have much more caffeine than the maximum daily intake that is safe for teens!



Which food and beverages contain caffeine?

Here are some examples of sources that contain caffeine:

Food	Serving Size	Caffeine (mg)
Coffee	1 cup (237 ml)	76–179
Tea (black, green, white, oolong)	1 cup (237 ml)	15–50
Colas and some root beers (regular or diet)	1 can (335 ml)	36–50
Iced Tea (Lipton, Nestle)	1 can (473–491 ml)	34–50
Energy Drinks (Red Bull, Monster, 5-hour energy)	1 can (59–473 ml)	80–180
Vitamin Water	1 bottle (591 ml)	40–180
Chocolate Cake	1 piece (80 g)	36

Although caffeine is naturally found in tea, coffee, and cocoa beans, much of the caffeine consumed by teens comes in the form of added caffeine in energy drinks, sport drinks, chocolate bars, and of course, pop.

Ways to help avoid/reduce caffeine intake

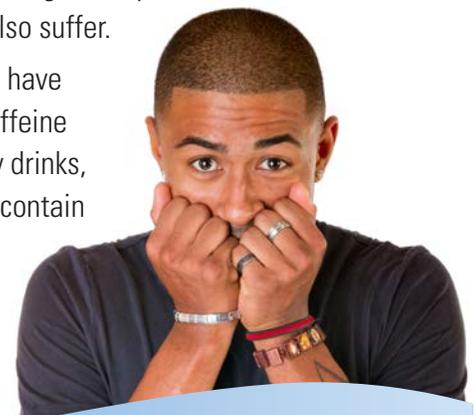
Regular use of caffeine can make you physically dependent on the stuff, and quitting cold turkey might cause headaches and drowsiness—symptoms of withdrawal. Here are some tips to cut back slowly. Better yet, avoid consuming caffeine in the first place!

- Drink decaffeinated coffee
- Mix regular coffee with half decaffeinated coffee
- Replace your coffee with tea – tea contains significantly less caffeine than coffee
- Try caffeine-free herbal teas or apple cider for a hot drink
- Brew tea for less time
- Try caffeine-free versions of carbonated beverages
- Sleep! If you are rested, you might be less inclined to grab that cup of java

Think drinking lots of caffeine is cool?

Think again. Here are some other things to consider that go hand in hand with caffeine intake:

- Ever heard of the term coffee breath? It's a fact. Not to mention it can stain your teeth over time.
- If you consume caffeine every day, your body will start to develop a tolerance for it. You may not get the "good effects" of feeling more awake and able to concentrate unless you use more of it. Not only is intaking a high amount of caffeine dangerous, your bank account will also suffer.
- Many products that have artificially added caffeine such as pop, energy drinks, and chocolate bars contain a lot of sugar – contributing to tooth decay and weight gain.



Region of Waterloo Public Health

Healthy Eating and Active Communities