

## How Much Caffeine is Ok?

So what's the verdict on your daily coffee? My philosophy is I'll try anything twice and most substances can be used for tribal purposes. It's the abuse of a substance that starts the problem.

Did you know that worldwide, 120,000 tons of caffeine is consumed each year? That's the equivalent of one caffeine-containing beverage per day for each of the 5 billion plus inhabitants of planet earth.

Welcome to the most widely consumed psycho-active substance in the world.

Humans have been using this drug since the Stone Age. Our early ancestors elevated their moods, stimulated their awareness and eased fatigue by chewing the bark, leaves or seeds of certain plants.

Today we big monkeys may have refined our tastes but are not much different. We consume caffeine in coffee, tea, cocoa, chocolate, some soft drinks, and even some drugs. But how much do we really know about the substance whose consumption is rivalled only by water?

Caffeine is found in varying amounts in the fruit, leaves, and beans of over 60 plants. In the plant world, caffeine acts as a natural pesticide that paralyses and kills some insects that try and feed on these plants.

But the word itself comes from the French term for coffee, café. Your typical morning latte can contain an upwards of 200g of caffeine. A cup of tea averages around 70mg, soft drinks anywhere from 10 to 50mg per beverage, and an average 28g serving of milk chocolate contains about as much caffeine as a cup of decaffeinated coffee.

Studies have shown that a complete tolerance to the subjective effects of caffeine can be seen to develop after consuming 300mg of caffeine 3 times per day for 18 days, and sometimes even earlier.

Caffeine is completely absorbed by the stomach and small intestine within 45 minutes but its effects can be felt after around 15 minutes. And just what are these effects? Well, caffeine is a central nervous system and metabolic stimulant.

Because of the norepinephrine released in the brain after ingestion, caffeine increases respiration, strengthens the pulse, raises blood pressure, stimulates the kidneys, temporarily relieves fatigue, and excites the brain, improving mental function.

Caffeine and its related substance theobromine (from tea and cocoa) are like sugar in their effects on the body. They stimulate the adrenal glands to release an adrenaline-like substance, which causes the liver to release sugar into the blood stream.

This is what gives you the lift you feel from drinking caffeinated beverages.

Just like alcohol and nicotine, caffeine readily crosses the blood brain barrier. There in the brain it also constricts cerebral blood vessels. If you're used to drinking a few cups of coffee a day but decide to give it a rest, those blood vessels will dilate, leaving you with one hell of a headache, one of the best known withdrawal symptoms.

Other symptoms can include irritability, an inability to concentrate, and even stomach aches.

These feelings can appear within 12 to 24 hours if no caffeine has crossed your lips, peak at approximately 48 hours and last from one to five days.

It takes the body an average of 7 to 9 hours to process the caffeine in one cup of coffee. Women, however, metabolise caffeine about 25% faster than men unless they are taking oral contraceptives or are ovulating which then increases the time to 10 to 20 hours!

So, in my view 1-2 cups a day won't cause you too much harm, but the benefits you'll achieve by using caffeine only when you need it will far surpass your daily psychological reliance on those cups of coffee.

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## About the Author

Brett Smith is not your average health and [online dating](#) expert. He has some interesting and controversial views on health for [singles](#).