

MANY PEOPLE don't realize that caffeine is a drug. It's a stimulant that can be found in many pain relievers and cold medications as well as in foods and beverages.

Here are some commonly used products that contain caffeine:

Coffee (1 cup)	40-180 mg
Decaffeinated coffee (1 cup)	2-5 mg
Tea (1 cup)	10-110 mg
Stimulants (1 tablet)	100-250 mg
Painkillers (1 tablet)	30-100 mg
Cola drinks (12 oz/355 ml)	30-60 mg
Dark chocolate (2 oz/56 g)	40-50 mg
Milk chocolate (2 oz/56 g)	3-20 mg

## Short-term effects

- Less than 200 mg of caffeine (1 or 2 cups of coffee) can make you more alert and less tired. It can also increase your ability to do physical work and improve your thinking.
- Small amounts of caffeine can also cause an increase in blood pressure and urination.
- Larger amounts (600 mg or more) can make you feel irritable, restless and nervous. You may also experience tremors, insomnia and rapid, irregular heartbeat. When taken before bed, caffeine may interfere with your sleep.
- People who suffer from panic attacks should avoid caffeine in large amounts, as it can trigger nervousness and anxiety.
- Death from a caffeine overdose is very rare. You would have to inject at least 3.9 g of caffeine or swallow about 10 g. However, much lower doses of caffeine can cause death in children.
- Caffeine can be useful in treating some types of headaches, including migraines. Your doctor can tell you if caffeine would be a good way for you to get rid of a headache.
- Caffeine should not be used for dieting as it will not suppress your appetite.
- Caffeine does not help drunk people to sober up.

## Long-term effects

- Daily use of low to moderate amounts of caffeine (1 to 3 cups of coffee) by most healthy adults does not appear to cause any bad effects.
- Regular use of more than 600 mg may have short-term effects such as those listed above or long-term effects such as chronic insomnia, constant anxiety and depression, and stomach upset.
- There is some evidence that consumption of more than 300 mg of caffeine (i.e. about 2 to 3 cups of coffee) in a day is associated with miscarriages and low birth weight babies. Women should consider limiting or eliminating caffeine intake while pregnant.

## Caffeine and addiction

As your body gets used to caffeine, it needs more and more of it to get the same effect. As the amount of caffeine increases, so does the risk of side effects.

You can become mildly dependent on caffeine from regularly consuming 350 mg (about 2 to 4 cups of coffee).

If you suddenly stop consuming caffeine, you may experience withdrawal symptoms such as headaches and sleep problems. You may also feel irritable, tired and depressed.

Withdrawal symptoms begin 12 to 24 hours after you stop consuming caffeine. Most symptoms will pass within a few days.