

WELLNESS CONNECTION

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GOOD DECISIONS - The Buzz on Caffeine



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March is National Caffeine Awareness Month and if you are like a lot of people, you have already consumed some form of caffeine before reading this article. That is not surprising since caffeine is the most popular stimulant drug in the world and it is consumed daily in some form by 90 percent of people in the United States. While caffeine in moderation has been deemed safe by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), many people do not recognize how it affects their bodies.

How much caffeine is too much? The FDA recommends to keep your intake to under 400 milligrams a day. Here is a list of beverages and how much caffeine they typically contain:

- 12 oz. soft drink: 30-40 mg
- 8 oz. cup of green or black tea: 30-50 mg
- 8 oz. cup of coffee: 80-100 mg
- 8 oz. energy drinks: 40-250 mg

Remember that foods may also contain caffeine if they contain certain ingredients, such as chocolate or guarana. The nutrition label should list the caffeine content of a product.

Caffeine and Metabolism: Caffeine is a stimulant, which means it affects your central nervous system and causes you to feel more awake or give you an increase in energy. This is why those who are sensitive to caffeine or those who overconsume the drug can experience jitters. Caffeine is also known to have diuretic properties, meaning it helps your body get rid of extra salt and water by increasing urination. This can cause dehydration if additional water is not consumed to compensate for the loss of fluids.

Caffeine and Blood Pressure: Caffeine can cause a short but dramatic increase in your blood pressure, even if you do not have high blood pressure. While it is unclear what causes this spike, within one hour of eating or drinking caffeine, it reaches its peak level in your bloodstream. To determine if caffeine might be raising your blood pressure, check your blood pressure before drinking a caffeinated beverage and again between 30 to 120 minutes afterward. If your blood pressure increases by 5 to 10 points, you may be sensitive to the effects of caffeine.

Caffeine and Sleep: Many people know to avoid caffeine before bedtime. However, even caffeine in the afternoon can interfere with your sleep. While caffeine may not prevent you from falling asleep, it can cause you to toss and turn during the night and even shorten the length of time you sleep.

National Caffeine Awareness month is not about cutting out or even cutting back on caffeine! It is simply getting the conversation started on understanding how we can safely consume the stimulant that so many of us enjoy on a daily basis.

